A

Syſtem of Divinity,

in

A COURSE of SERMONS,

on the

FIRST INSTITUTIONS of RELIGION;

On the BEING and ATTRIBUTES of GOD;

on ſome of the moſt important

ARTICLES of the CHRISTIAN-RELIGION,

in Connection;

And

On the ſeveral Virtues and Vices of Mankind:

with Occaſional Diſcourſes.

Being a Compilation from the beſt Sentiments of the polite Writers, and eminent, ſound Divines, both ancient and modern, on the ſame Subjects, properly connected, with Improvements, particularly adapted for the Uſe of chief FAMILIES and STUDENTS in DIVINITY; and for CHURCHES, for the Benefit of Mankind in general.

Volume V.

By the Rev'd Wm DAVY. A. B.

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A

SERMONS

ON

Some of the moſt important ARTICLES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

In CONNECTION.

"Order is Heaven's firſt Law."

"Continue in the Faith, grounded and ſettled."
Col. i. 23.

SERMONS

ON

Some of the most Important Articles

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

"Continue in the Faith, grounded and Settled."
Col. i. 23.

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On the Benefit of Creation.

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"Praiſe the Lord, O my Soul, & all that is with-
"in me, praiſe his Holy Name; Praiſe the Lord, O
"my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits."

(A) There is nothing which can fill the Mind of Man with more noble or exalted Pleaſure than the Contemplation of the wonderful Works of the Creation; as there is nothing which can give greater Proof of a contracted and abject Spirit, than to be daily converſant with, and yet ſtupidly inſenſible of, the amazing Miracles of Nature.

The World was not made by a wiſe and beneficent Creator, that the Wonders of it ſhould open themſelves to Eyes that ſee not, or diſplay themſelves unregarded to its incurious Inhabitants.

It is, indeed, principally for the Pleaſure of Him by whom all things exiſt, that "they are, and were created;"

(A) For the Occaſion here, as in the firſt Edition, ſee Vol. IV. on the Duty of Praiſing God, where it is inſerted.

created;" "who rejoiceth in his Works," in ſurveying that Structure which Omniptence alone could raiſe: but they are likewiſe deſigned to communicate Happineſs, not only in the ſenſual Gratifications, but alſo in the intellectual and moral Improvement of Mankind.

To the Mind that can reliſh Enjoyments ſuperiour to thoſe of Senſe, they will afford the moſt rational Entertainment; and to him that is not barely ſatisfied with a fruitleſs Admiration of Things, they will ſuggeſt ſuch Reflections as will make him both wiſer and better, — At the ſame Time that they feaſt his Imagination, they will enlarge his Underſtanding and meliorate his Heart.

Leaving every Man apart, therefore, to reflect on the particular Mercies of God, vouchſafed to him, I ſhall confine myſelf to thoſe Three great and general Inſtances of his Goodneſs towards us, which, (by our Church,) are made Matter of publick and ſtanding Thankſgiving: [viz]

Firſt, "For our Creation,"

Secondly, "Preſervation." And, above all,

Thirdly, "For the Redemption of the World, "by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; whereby we "obtain the Means of Grace and Hopes of Glory."

Theſe

These stupendous Instances of his Goodness, I shall separately consider; laying down under each of them, such Improvements as may naturally result from them. And,

First, Of Creation. — And here,

Before I proceed to the immediate Consideration of the great Benefit of it, as a Motive to our Praise and Thanksgiving; I shall first speak to the Fact itself, and the Possibility of it.

"In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth." — Such is the Commencement of the History of Mankind; an Æra to which we must ever look back with solemn Awe and Veneration.

Before the Sun and the Moon had begun their Course; — Before the Sound of Human Voice was heard, or the Name of Man was known; "In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth."

To a Beginning of the World, we are led back by every thing that now exists. In tracing the Transactions of past Ages, we arrive at a Period, which clearly indicates the Infancy of the Human Race. We behold the World peopled by Degrees. We ascend to the Origin of all those useful and necessary Arts, without the Knowledge of which, Mankind could hardly subsist. We discern Society and Civili-

zation arising from rude Beginnings, in every Corner of the Earth; and gradually advancing to the State in which we now find them. All which afford a plain Evidence, that there was a Period, when Mankind began to inhabit and cultivate the Earth. And, what is very remarkable, the most authentick Chronology and History of most Nations, coincides with the Account of Scripture; and makes the Period, during which the World has been inhabited by the Race of Men, not to exceed 6000 Years.

To the antient Philosophers, Creation from Nothing, appeared an unintelligible Idea. (A) They maintained the eternal Existence of Matter, which they supposed to be modelled by the Sovereign Mind of the Universe, into the Form which the Earth now exhibits. But,

It is as hard to apprehend how a Mind, by its Thought, should give Motion to Matter, as that it should give it Being. A Being, not made by God, is not so easily conceiveable to be under the Acts of his Mind, as That which is made by Him.

This

(A) *De Nihilo Nihil, in Nihilum Nil posse reverti.* *Christianâ Fide constat Deum Opt. Max. de Nihilo omnia creasse: Et communis Opinio fuit veterum Philosophorum*, E Nihilo Nihil fieri, et non posse id quod est, in Nihilum abire. *Nil igitur fieri de Nihilo posse putandum est, Semine quando opus est rebus.* Lucret. lib. 1.

This Conceit plainly destroys infinite Perfection, which cannot be in God, if all Beings are not from him, and under his Authority.

There is nothing in This Opinion which gives it any Title to be opposed to the Authority of Revelation; The Doctrine of two self-Existent, independent Principles, God and Matter, the One active, the Other passive, is an Hypothesis, which presents Difficulties to human Reason, at least as great as the Creation of Matter from Nothing. Indeed,

The giving Being to things that were not, is an Exercise of Power which surpasses our Comprehension, because it is unparalleled in other Causes, and far beyond any Activity that we are conscious of, in ourselves, or can by any Means of our Senses discern in others, which requires pre-existent Materials to work upon.

A Power to change the exterior and visible Forms of Matter is what we can easily comprehend, for that we find ourselves able to do in many Instances. But, to bring Something out of Nothing, or cause that to exist which had no Existance before, in any Form, requires a Power so much superior to ours, and is so unlike any Agency which falls within our Observation and Experience, that no Materials of our Knowledge can furnish us with any Notion of it.

Some, indeed, have presumed to assert, that Creation in this Sense, is in itself absolutely impossible; so that it passed into an Axiom with the ancient Atheists, which they relied on as the chief Support of their Cause, that "Nothing can come from Nothing."

But, indeed, if we attend to the Proposition itself abstractedly, we shall see no rational Foundation, upon which it could be received as a certain Truth in this Sense, that nothing can possibly be created, or no real Entity begin to be.

What Appearance of Contradiction is there in supposing that Matter, a Kind of Being so imperfect, intirely passive and liable to so many Mutations, should begin to exist, or that it should cease to be, by the Efficiency of a powerful Agent? Is there any Absurdity in conceiving that there might have been more or less of it than there actually is? Nay, is not this a Supposition which our Minds come easily into? - And if so, there can appear no Absurdity in placing it within the Compass of creating Power.

We can scarcely imagine what should have led Men into such a Way of thinking, as that Creation in the strictest Sense, is impossible; unless it be that they are sensible it is above their own Power, and above the ordinary Operations of Nature which we discern.

diction. (A) But, shall we measure all Power by our own scanty Perfection, and conclude that there is none greater than what we possess; or at least, than we can comprehend; when there are numberless Appearances in the World, the Productions of an invisible Power, which we have neither the Ability to effect, nor can understand the Reasons of them.

If we attend to the Operations of our own Minds, the Formation of NEW Beings needs not appear so strange to us, as to give any Occasion for imagining it to be impossible. For, tho' our Minds are unequal to the Production of NEW Substances, yet their Works are so far above the Operations of Matter, (which are the Objects of our Senses,) that Creation is not more unlike the highest Efforts of the Human Capacity.

The rising-up of NEW Ideas and Sentiments in the Mind, and NEW Dispositions; its giving, by its own Activity, a NEW Determination to the Exercise of its own Faculties, and raising an intirely NEW Motion in some Bodies — Creation, is not more unlike

(A) Its being incomprehensible to us, is no Argument at all, since it does not appear to our Minds impossible, or to imply a Contradiction; on the Contrary, we have great Reason to believe that both our own Spirits, and the Matter of the Universe, were originally the Productions of the infinite Power, out of absolute Non-Existence.

like theſe, than they are to Mecheniſm; which ſhews us that Operations of One Sort can give us no Idea of Another. - But we have no more Reaſon on That Account to deny the Poſſibility of them, than a blind Man has to deny that there is or can be, any ſuch thing as Light or Colours.

But, Why ſhould any Man imagine that the Power of bringing things into Being from pure Non-Exiſtence, is abſurd, who, reflecting on himſelf, is naturally led to conclude, that he began to be, and therefore is himſelf an Inſtance of a NEW Subſtantial Production, by creating Power.

Every Man knows that his own Perſonality, (i.e) his Conſciouſneſs had a Beginning and Commencement of Being, and is of no very long Duration; (for the arbitrary Suppoſition of the Pre-Exiſtence of Souls even from Eternity, we may paſs-by, as a Conceit not worthy of our Notice, being ſupported by no Kind of Evidence,) nor is the Creature here ſpoken-of, a NEW ſpiritual Subſtance, but a NEW Perſon; and ſince this thinking conſcious Self, a ſubſtantial Being, of whoſe Exiſtence we have the greateſt Certainty, began to be, not of itſelf, but produced by a Cauſe, it may be to us a ſatisfying Proof of creating Power. For,

What greater Difficulty can there be in conceving

that

that God made Heaven and Earth, than in conceiving that He formed "the self-conscious Spirit of a Man within him?" Is Matter any more real than the Principle of Thought and Volition? And, could not the Power which gave Existence to the One, produce the Other also? Indeed,

Nothing can be said to be incredible, if there is a Power in any Person able to effect it; for if there is such a Power, That Power may bring into Existence the very things which we doubt of. And,

That this Power is in God, cannot, (it is presumed,) be doubted. If it depended on Us, it would be incredible indeed: But, it is not so; It is the Work of God, and of him only; and surely, He is of Credit and Power sufficient to this great Effect.

Whoever, therefore, affirms that a Creation is in itself a thing incredible, must affirm, that it is incredible that God has Power to do it. But, Who is there that can, consistently with the common Principles of Reason and Nature, deny this to Him? No one certainly, who admits a God, can entertain this Doubt. (A) Indeed,

If this be doubted, We must then bid Adieu at once to all Religion: for, if God created not the World,

(A) See Vol. I. page 272. Sect. LXVII.

World, how is Man then at all related to Him? If He did not make us, what Right hath he to govern us? or what Pretence to our Obedience?

Neither the Deiſt from Nature; nor we from Revelation, can in this Caſe be ever ſatisfied.

Adhering, then, to the Teſtimony of Scripture, we believe that "in the Beginning God created," or, from Non-Exiſtence, brought into Being, "the Heaven and the Earth. (A) And!

What an awful Moment was That, when there ſprang-up at once into Being, this mighty Globe, on which ſo many Millions of Creatures now dwell!

No preparatory Meaſures were required. No long Circuit of Means was employed; Nothing but the active and efficacious WORD of God: "He ſpake the WORD, and it was done; - He COMMANDED, and it ſtood-faſt." — "Thus the Heavens and the Earth were finiſhed, and all the Hoſt of them;" The laſting Monuments of God's Almighty Power and ſuper-

(A) The World was not formed from any ancient pre-exiſtent Matter, (for ſo much, indeed, doth the Term *Creation* imply,) but from a mere Void; in a Word, from Nothing: God not only diſpoſed the Matter or Subſtance of it into That Form and Order in which it now is; but even called the Matter itſelf into Being, which before had no Exiſtence, ſave in the Divine Will.

superabundant Goodness. (A)

The Earth, at its first Formation by the powerful Word of God, was "without Form and Void, and Dark-

(A) The "God made the World by the Word of his Power;" yet this doth not exclude the Exercise of his Wisdom previous to it: for thus we are assured that "He stretched out the Heavens by his *Wisdom*, and established the Earth by his *Understanding*."

As God, therefore, was the *intending* Cause of the World, his active Intelligence was exercised in the Formation, and the Plan formed in his all-comprehending Mind. In other Words, The Design, or the *archetypal* Ideas of the true Essence of things subsisted in his Understanding before the things themselves actually had a Being; for, who can imagine such an Inconsistency as Intelligence in the Operation and not in the Intention? Can a Work be made with Wisdom, and Wisdom not be prior to it? Or the Parts of a Structure be so put together, as to show wise Contrivance, without the Agent's having laid a Scheme beforehand, and formed a Model by which his Proceedings should be directed?

How this Wisdom was exercised by God, is not for us to determine. *Successive* Thoughts, as well as *successive* Duration, (see Note (A) Vol. I. page 270.) seem inconsistent both with Eternity, and with infinite Wisdom, as arguing a Progress in Knowledge, & Deliberation in Council, which carry Defect and Infirmity in them. To conceive how this is in God, is far above our Capacity; who, tho we feel our Imperfection in *successive* Acts; yet cannot apprehend how all things can be both seen and determined by *one single* Thought. But the divine Essence being so infinitely above us, it is no Wonder if we can frame no distinct Idea concerning its Knowledg and Will.

"The Shadow of Knowledge passeth over the Mind of Man, as a Dream; he seeth as in the Dark; he reasoneth, and is deceived. But the Wisdom of God is as the Light of Heaven; He reasoneth not, for his Mind is the Fountain of Truth."

Darkneſs was upon the Face of the Deep." (A) The Almighty ſurvey'd the dark Abyſs, & fixed Bounds to the ſeveral Diviſions of Nature, and created all things in their Order. He beheld his Work, when it was finiſhed; and pronounced it "very Good." Superior Beings ſaw with Wonder this new Acceſſion to Exiſtence. "The Morning-Stars ſang together, and all the Sons of God ſhouted for Joy."

The World, then, is plainly the Offspring of the One great and wiſe Mind, which produced it, and diſpoſed all its Parts in that beautiful Order in which they appear and continue (B); and gave them thoſe regular Motions which they preſerve, and by which they are preſerved. But,

II

(A) The Earth, after its immediate Creation, was for ſome Time a promiſcuous, dark, fluid, and unformed Maſs.

(Jamquè Mare, et Tellus nullum Diſcrimen habebant,
Nil niſi Pontus erat, deerantquè quoquè Littora Ponto.

Seas and Earth were in Confuſion loſt,
A World of Waters, and without a Coaſt.

Non benè junctarum diſcordia Semina rerum.
Radis, indigeſtaquè Moles,)

which God, (his Spirit moving upon its Surface, to influence and actuate it,) in the Space of ſix Days, diſpoſed and reduced into the preſent State of the World.

(B) See the firſt Article of Religion.

II. On this great Work of Creation, let us not merely gaze with Aſtoniſhment. — Let us conſider how it ſhould affect our Conduct, by preſenting the divine Perfections in a Light which is at once edifying, and comfortable to Man. And here,

To be called out of Duſt, into Life, & from ſenſeleſs inactive Matter, to the Exerciſe & Enjoyment of various Delights, cannot ſurely but be acknowledged an exceeding Favour, ſeeing that the Happineſs, which Life affords, aboundantly ſurpaſſes the Maſs of ſenſeleſs inactive Matter; even if we take into the Account alſo, the Troubles which in this Life we meet with.

Of this, every Man is ſenſible in whom the Breath of Life is, from that utter Averſion every thing has to lay-down the Life he is here poſſeſſed of. (A) But,

To put it out of all Doubt, whether Creation is a Benefit, we may not only evidence it from the Nature of God, but alſo from the Nature of the thing itſelf. And Firſt, From

(A) Self-Preſervation is the firſt Law of Nature.

The Mind of Man, retiring into itſelf, and attentively ſurveying its own Powers & Operations, muſt rejoice in its own Being; and tracing them back to the true Original, the free and kind Intention of the Self-deſigning Cauſe, muſt acknowledge it infinitely good in its own Make and Conſtitution. Serm. LXVII.

From the Nature of God, who is good, and therefore doth good, and consequently could not make us, but with a Design to our After-Benefit. But,

To manifest it more clearly, and beyond all Exception, let us have Recourse to the thing itself, and examine a little the things that are made.

The Psalmist asserts that "the Works of the Lord are great, sought-out of all them that have Pleasure therein." — This is true of all God's Works, but particularly of his Works of Creation, inasmuch as they are made with the most exquisite Art, contrived with the utmost Sagacity, and ordered with a plain and wise Design, all ministring to admirable Ends.

Whatever Part of the Creation we cast our Eyes upon, we shall find written therein ample Lessons of Instruction. Would we contemplate and adore the inexpressible Greatness and Majesty of the Most-High, let us look-up unto the Heavens, which are "spread over us like a Curtain:" they loudly "declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-Work." It openly sheweth it even to the rude and illiterate; and the Mind, which is improved by Science, may forever expand itself in the Immensity of the Prospect.

The ample Arch of Heaven, extended over our Heads,

Heads, with its innumerable, vaſt, and ſplendid Luminaries, the Sun, the Moon, and all the Stars, plainly declare a God; for, "the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-Work:" And, who that conſiders theſe things, and views the Glories, and partakes of their beneficial Influences, but muſt at the ſame Time adore the Wiſdom & praiſe the Kindneſs of the Creator of them?

If we deſcend to this lower World, what a Scene diſcloſes itſelf for rational and religious Contemplation? — "The Earth hangeth," (in Job's Expreſſion,) "upon nothing;" and by an invisible Hand is directed to perform its Revolutions, ſo as to diverſify the Seaſons in their Order, and give a regular Succeſſion of Light and Heat to cheriſh every Part of the Globe. — What clear Manifeſtations have we here of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God? — How beautifully is the Surface of it cloathed in a green (*) Veſture, graceful to the Eye, and pouring forth Suſtenance to Man, and to the Creatures ſubſervient to his Uſe.

What Rhetoric can deſcribe the Beauty, & what Arithmetic can number the Variety of things here diſplayed before us?

If we examine the ſeveral Kinds of Animals, we ſhall find their Bodies adorned with admirable Fi-

(*) There are Writers of great Diſtinction, who have made it an Argument for Providence, that the whole Earth is covered with *green*, rather than with any other Colour, as being ſuch a right Mixture of Light and Shade, that it comforts and ſtrengthens the Eye, inſtead of weakening and grieving it. A famous modern Philoſopher accounts for it in the following Manner: All Colours that are more luminous, overpower & diſſipate the animal Spirits which are employed in Sight; on the Contrary, thoſe that are more obſcure, do not give the animal Spirits a ſufficient Exerciſe; whereas, the Rays that produce in us the Idea

From the Nature of God, who is good, and therefore doth good, and consequently could not make us, but with a Design to our After-Benefit. But,

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(*) Idea of *green*, fall upon the Eye in ſuch a due Proportion, that they give the animal Spirits their proper Play; and, by keeping up the Struggle in a juſt Balance, excite a very pleaſing and agreeable Senſation. Let the Cauſe be what it will, the Effect is certain: for which Reaſon the Poets aſcribe to this particular Colour, the Epithet of *chearful*.

gure and Form, and excellent Beauty.

What is Man! — A Creature endued with a rational and immortal Soul, lodged in a fair and majeſtic Structure; a ſuitable Habitation for ſo noble a Gueſt. — As he is the moſt excellent of Animals, ſo likewiſe he is the moſt ſtately and beautiful.

The holy Pſalmiſt was ſo ſtrock with the Admiration of himſelf, that he, in Extacy, confeſſed the Supremacy of Wiſdom in God in the Workmanſhip of him: "Thou, (ſays he,) haſt faſhioned me behind and before; ſuch Knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, I cannot attain unto it: Marvelous are thy Works, O Lord, and that my Soul knoweth right well."

Man, then, with Reſpect to his Body, "is curiouſly made;" his outward Appearance is beautiful, but inwardly he is more ſo; yea, "he is all-glorious within." With Reſpect to his Body, he is related to this World, and is of the Earth; but in Reſpect of his Soul, he is allied to Heaven, and is deſcended from Above: Though his Body be curious, yet it falls infinitely ſhort in Value of the Soul that is lodged within; for how doth the glorious Faculty of Reaſon and Underſtanding exalt us above all! whereby we can not only defend and provide for the Body, but even "pry into the deep things of God." But,

What

What further manifests the Goodness of God to us, and of Course, the great Benefit of Creation, is, the vast Supply of things created for the Use of Man. — God has not only commanded the Earth largely to supply us with the Necessaries of Life for our comfortable Subsistence, but even with a Superfluity of Delicacies, for our Delight. How are our Senses, those Inlets of Pleasure, regaled with the Enjoyment of the kind Entertainments which Nature sets before us; - how comfortable and refreshing is the Fragrancy of Herbs and Flowers, and Spices to the Smell! How pleasing is the Delicacy of Plants and Fruits to the Organs of Taste! And what Spectacles of Delight do every where present themselves to our Eyes, in the cheerful Verdure and gay Embroidery of the Fields! - In a Word, we have every thing to gratify our Senses, - to entertain our Fancy, & to multiply our innocent Pleasures. Surely some reasonable Sentiments should arise, - some Returns of Acknowledgement and Gratitude should be paid to our indulgent Creator, who has diversified and embellished the Scene for our better Entertainment, and Refreshment in our Passage, in our weary Pilgrimage thro' Life.

How many things are there in the World for the Service and Pleasure, for the Use and Delight of

Man, and the which, if Man were not, would be but of little, or no Use? — Would the Mole have admired the fine Gold? or would the Beast of the Forest have felled the Oak and tall Cedar, for their various Uses?

God, then, hath not only created Man, and exercised his Wisdom on him, by giving him an excellent Form, and enduing him with Reason, but hath also created, and given to him, "every green Herb, and the Trees upon all high Mountains; and hath subjected under his Dominion, all Fowls of the Air, & the Cattle upon a thousand Hills; & to him they are for Meat and for the Exercise thereof." (A)

(A) It cannot be thought, that the Comparison is here stretched beyond its proper Bounds, when carried to this Height. It is my real Opinion, that the World, at least this lower World, with its various Appurtenances, was intended *purely* for Man; that it is *appropriated* to him; and that he, (in Subordination to God's Glory,) is the *End* of the Creation. — Other Animals, it is true, partake of the Creator's Benefits; but then, they partake under the Notion of Man's Domesticks, or on the Foot of Retainers to him; as Creatures which bear some Relation to his Service, & some Way or other contribute to his Good. So that still he is the *Centre* of the Whole; or, as our incomparable *MILTON*, equally Master of Poetry & Divinity, expresses himself, - "ALL THINGS LIVE FOR MAN."

Mr. *POPE*, in his Ethic Epistles, is pleased to explode this Tenet, as the Height of *Pride*, and a gross *Absurdity*. — For my Part, I see no Reason for such a Charge. With all Submission to so superior a Genius, it seems very remote from Pride, to be duly sensible of Favours vouchsafed

"O! that Men would, therefore, praiſe the Lord for his

wonderful; to contemplate them in all the Extent of their Munificence, and acknowledge them accordingly. I ſhould rather imagine, that to contract their Size, when they are immenſely large; and ſtint their Number, when they are altogether innumerable; that ſuch a Procedure favours more of *Inſenſibility*, than our Hypotheſis of Preſumption; and has more in it of *Ingratitude*, than that of Arrogance.

And how can it be deemed an Abſurdity, to maintain that God gave us a *World* for our Poſſeſſion, when it is our Duty to believe, that he gave us his *only Son* for our Propitiation? Surely, it can be neither difficult, nor extravagant, to ſuppoſe that he deſigned the habitable Globe, with its whole Furniture, for our preſent Uſe; ſince he withheld not his only Son, but freely delivered him up for our Salvation.

Upon the Whole, we cannot but conclude, that the Attempt of our famous Poet is neither *kind* with Regard to his Fellow-Creatures, nor *grateful* with Regard to his Creator; neither is his Scheme, in Fact, *true*. The Attempt is not *kind*, with Regard to Man; becauſe it robs him of one of the moſt delightful and raviſhing Contemplations imaginable. To conſider the great Author of Exiſtence, as having *MAN* in his Eye, when he formed univerſal Nature; as contriving all things with an immediate View to the Exigencies of his particular State, and making them all in ſuch a Manner, as might be moſt conducive to his particular Advantage; This muſt occaſion the ſtrongeſt Satisfactions, whenever we caſt a Glance on the Objects around us. — Nor *grateful* with Regard to God; becauſe it has the moſt direct Tendency to diminiſh our Senſe of his Kindneſs, and by that Means to throw a Damp upon our Gratitude. It teaches us to look upon ourſelves as almoſt loſt among a Croud of other Beings, or regarded only with an occaſional and incidental Beneficence, which muſt certainly weaken the Diſpoſition, and indeed ſlacken the Ties to moſt adoring Thankfulneſs. — To the foregoing, (it is apprehended,) we may juſtly add, Neither is the Scheme in Fact, *true*. For, not to mention what might be urged

his Goodneſs, and declare the Wonders that he doeth for the Children of Men; that they would offer unto him the Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, and tell out his Works with Gladneſs" —Whatever can contribute to the Service or Pleaſure of Man; whatever is neceſſary for the Comfort, as well as the Supports of Life; the Earth brings-forth in Abundance, and pays as a Tribute to Man, to whom Dominion is given over all that is therein. — How is the Surface of it ſpread over, as a Table well furniſhed, with a Variety of delicate Herbs, Fruits, and Grains, to nouriſh

from the ſure Word of Revelation, this one Argument appears ſufficiently concluſive. The World began with Man, and will ceaſe with him; conſequently, the grand Uſe, the principal End of the World, is, to ſubſerve the Intereſt of Man. — It is on all Hands agreed, that the Edifice was erected, when Man was to be furniſhed with an Habitation; & that it will be demoliſhed, when Man hath no further Need of its Accommodations. When he enters into the Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, "the Earth, and all the Works that are therein, ſhall be diſſolved." From which it ſeems a very obvious and fair Deduction, that Man is the *final Cauſe* of this inferior Creation. So that we are doubtleſs privileged, (not to ſay, on the Principles of Gratitude, oblidged) to uſe the following Lines, with a Propriety and Truth equal to their Elegance and Beauty.

"For *ME* kind Nature wakes her genial Pow'r,
"Suckles each Herb, and ſpreads out ev'ry Flow'r;
"Annual for *ME*, the Grape, the Roſe renew
"The Juce nectareous, and the balmy Dew;
"For *ME*, the Mine a thouſand Treaſures brings;
"For *ME*, Health guſhes from a thouſand Springs."

nourish our Bodies, to please our Taste, to enliven our Spirits, and to cure our Diseases! God himself at the Creation of them was graciously pleased to declare, that for the Use of Man, and for his Nourishment and Support, they were all originally designed. "Behold, (says he to Adam,) I have given you every Herb, bearing Seed, which is upon the Face of all the Earth, and every Tree in which is the Fruit of a Tree bearing Seed, to you it shall be for Meat." — How gracious is the Lord and merciful to be thus mindful of Man, whilst he is too often regardless of his Benefactor; and who bountifully fills the Mouths of those who forget to think of him, & to praise him for his Goodness to the Children of Men. — Though he opens the Doors of Heaven, and rains down Plenty upon the Earth, though "the Clouds drop Fatness, and the Valleys stand so thick with Corn, that they even laugh and sing," yet how frequently does the Ingratitude of Man receive this Profusion of Goodness without once reflecting upon the Hand that scatters it, or blessing the Author of the Increase!

This is but a faint, and an imperfect Sketch of the Beauty of the Universe: He that would have a just and adequate Idea of that stupendous Whole, must consult the Original. — For the Beauties of Nature

nare too various and too exquisite to be truly delineated by any Pencil, but her own; or to be described by mortal Eloquence; however exalted or refined.

For, "who can declare the Works of the Lord, or who can shew forth all his Greatness?" — A thousand secret Charms, — Ten thousand inexpressible Graces will be wanting in the most complete and lively Representation that can be given of them, by the wisest of the Sons of Men. For,

"How manifold are thy Works, O Lord; in Wisdom hast thou made them all: The Earth is full of thy Goodness."

Sermon

SERMON LXVIII.

On the same Subject.

Psal. ciii. 1, 2.

"Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise his Holy Name; Praise the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits."

The Improvements to be made of the foregoing, are,

First, From the Beauty & Order of the Creation, we infer the Being and Existence of God.

There is no greater, at least no more convincing Argument for the Existence of a Deity, than the admirable Art and Wisdom which discovers itself in the Make and Constitution, in the Order and Disposition, the Ends and Uses of ourselves, and the things aroud us.

If the Works of Art infer the Being and Operation of some intelligent Architect; can it otherwise be, than that the Grandeur & Magnificence, the excellent Contrivance, for Beauty, Order, and Use, in the

Works

Works of Nature, which is ſo obſervable in them, but that theſe ſhould likewiſe infer the Exiſtence & Efficiency of an omnipotent and all-wiſe Creator?

The Beauty of the Univerſe plainly ſhews, that it is neither the Work of Fate, nor of blind Chance, nor of fortuitous Concourſe; but of a powerful and munificent Intelligence; who conſider'd, in the framing of it, not only what was requiſite for its Preſervation, but likewiſe the Ornament of Nature; and provided not only for the Neceſſity, but even for the innocent Delight and Entertainment of all his reaſonable Creatures.

With how many various Charms and Graces hath he adorned every Part of the Univerſe, as if He deſigned that Nature ſhould repreſent to us the Beauty and Lovelineſs, as well as the Wiſdom and Beneficence of its Author! And,

Is it poſſible to think, that all this Beauty and Ornament, which appears in every Part of Nature, and meets our Eye wherever we turn it, can have any other Author than a wiſe & beneficent Being? Reaſon forbids it: — For, Would Fate or Chance, thoſe thoughtleſs, or rather chimerical Principles have provided, not only ſuch an amazing Plenty but have likewiſe conſulted the Ornament and Delight, the Order and Harmony which is obſervable

in

in them? — It would be a difficult Task to convince a reasonable Peasant, that even a common Cottage, that serves only to shelter its Inhabitants from the Inclemencies of the Weather, was the mere Effect of Chance; but he would certainly stand amazed at our Folly; should we seriously endeavour to persuade him, that a fair and magnificent Palace, exactly regular in its Design, adorned with elegant Sculptures and Paintings, and all the Decorations of Art, was the mere Concourse of Atoms thus blindly adjusted; he would certainly from thence infer a wise Agent; even as we, from the Works of the Creation, a supreme, all-wise, and beneficent God. For, how unreasonable is it to impute That to Chance, which carries with it all the Arguments and Characters of Intelligence and Wisdom!

Was ever any considerable Work, (containing great Variety a regular & orderly Disposition of Parts,) done by Chance? - Will Chance fit Means to Ends, in Millions of Instances, and not fail in one? - Is it to be supposed, that innumerable blind Parts of Matter should marshal themselves into a World, at once beautiful for Order, and of excellent and admirable Use? The very Supposition is absurd.

Can any thing then be more ridiculous, and contrary to Reason, than to countenance the weak a-

theiſtical Notions of Men, ſuch as that the World was made by Chance, and the Things therein by fortuitous Concourſe; and that Man, at firſt, ſprang as a Plant from the Earth?

What pitiful Shifts are the Atheiſts put-to, to countenance their Folly, or rather, which more ſtrongly expoſe it? Is it not far more reaſonable to attribute the vaſt Frame of the Univerſe, and the innumerable Multitude of Creatures therein, to God, as the Author of them?

To ſuppoſe a Being of infinite Goodneſs, Wiſdom and Power, the efficient Cauſe of the World's Creation, is, in itſelf, a thing neither abſurd nor improbable: For,

What is more likely to make this immenſe World, - to ſtretch-out the Heavens, - and lay the Foundation of the Earth, than infinite Power? What more likely to communicate Being, and ſo many Degrees of Happineſs to ſuch Variety of Creatures, than infinite Goodneſs? - Or, what more likely to continue this beautiful Fabric of the Univerſe, and all the Creatures therein, ſo perfect in their Kind, and each Part ſo exactly fitted to the Whole, than infinite Wiſdom? None, ſurely, but God, "who alone doth wonderful Works and marvelous to behold."

But

But further, Not only the Existence of God, but his Nature & Perfections also may be hence inferred.

God made the World, and all things; then is he Self-existent, - prior to the World, - and Eternal.

This is clearly evident; for, if God be the Creator of all, he cannot have his Being from any, seeing that the Creator must be before the Creature. God being the first Cause of all things, plainly infers, that there was no Cause of Him, - that he derived not his Being from any other, or depends upon him; but that he was always, and eternally of Himself.

And positively, that he is the Cause of all things besides himself, the Fountain & Original of all created Beings, from whom all things proceed, and upon whom all things depend. — In this the Scripture is express: - "God was from Everlasting;" "Before the World was;" and that "He laid the Foundation thereof;" and that "without Him was not any thing made, that was made." Again,

As the Creation manifests to us the Being, Self-Existence and Eternity of God, so doth it equally show-forth his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

First, His all-mighty Power: - To make all things of Nothing, and "by the Word of his Power," - to call Myriads of Beings into Life, cannot surely be

the Effect of impotent Weakneſs, or of leſs Power than His, "who can do whatever he will in the Armies of Heaven, and amidſt the Inhabitants of the Earth." But,

Secondly, His Wiſdom: — As the Extent of Creation ſhews the Fullneſs of God's Power, ſo doth the infinite Variety of things created, and their entire Connexion with the Whole, as plainly declare his infinite Wiſdom. For,

What leſs than Wiſdom infinite could create ſuch Variety of Creatures, each depending on, and ſupplying the Defect of the other. — Nothing is over looked. - Nothing is carelesſly performed. - Every thing that exiſts, is adapted with perfect Symetry to the End for which it was deſigned: - & muſt therefore, all of them have been preſent to the Mind of the Creator, and arranged from the Beginning, in his great Deſign, when He firſt formed the Heavens and the Earth. — "Such Knowledge is too wonderful for us; It is high; we cannot attain unto it."

But further, Not only his Power and Wiſdom are evident herefrom, but alſo,

Thirdly, His Goodneſs: As God by Creation hath manifeſted his Power; ſo by making this habitable World a plentiful Store-Houſe of every thing neceſſary

neceſſary to anſwer the Ends of Uſe, of Profit, and Pleaſure for all things therein, He hath equally ſhewn-forth his Wiſdom and Goodneſs.

Juſtly is "the Earth" ſaid to "be full of the Goodneſs of the Lord." — Throughout the whole Syſtem of things we behold a manifeſt Tendency to promote the Benefit of the rational, as well as the animal Creation.

In ſome Parts of Nature, this Tendency may be leſs obvious than to others. Objects, which to us ſeem uſeleſs or hurtful, may ſometimes occur; and ſtrange it were, if in ſo vaſt and complicated a Syſtem, Difficulties of this Kind ſhould not preſent themſelves, whoſe Views are ſo narrow and limited as our's. (A) It

(A) *Stultus, Nil rectum putat, niſi quod ipſe facit.*

Some things in the World, the Uſes of which were not at all known in the Infancy of Learning, ſuch as vaſt Tracts of Mountains, barren Deſerts, and wide Seas, have been ſtrongly inſiſted on, as Arguments to ſhow the Want of Wiſdom in the Frame of Nature. — But it is well known, that in Proportion as the Knowledge of Nature has increaſed among Men, theſe Difficulties have diminiſhed. Satisfactory Accounts have been given of many perplexing Appearances: - uſeful and proper Purpoſes have been found to be promoted, by Objects which were, at firſt, thought unprofitable or noxious. They are ſo far from being Blemiſhes in the Creation, that contrarywiſe, they are noble Works of the great Creator, and wiſely appointed by Him for the Good of our ſublunary World. See Derham's Phyſico-Theology, on Mountains and Valleys.

It is only for Want of our knowing theſe things better,

" As for the Works of the Lord, I know that whatſoever God
" doth, it ſhall be forever; there may be Nothing taken from them,
" neither may any thing be put to them; neither can the Ground of
" them be found out: When a Man hath done, then he beginneth:
" and when he leaveth-off, then he ſhall be doubtful; and God doth
" them, that Men ſhould fear before Him."

" See, thro' this Air, this Ocean, and this Earth,
" All Matter quick, and burſting into Birth.
" Above, how high progreſſive Life may go!
" Around, how wide! How deep extend below!
" Vaſt Chain of Being! which from God began,
" Nature æthereal, human; Angel, Man;
" Beaſt, Bird, Fiſh, Inſect, what no Eye can ſee,
" No Glaſs can reach; from Infinite to thee;
" From thee to Nothing. —— ——

" All are but Parts of One ſtupendous Whole;
" Whoſe Body Nature is, and God the Soul.

" Ceaſe then, nor ORDER Imperfection name:
" Our proper Bliſs depends on what we blame.
" Know thy own Point, —— ſubmit. ——

" All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
" All Chance, Direction, which thou canſt not ſee:
" All Diſcord, Harmony, not underſtood;
" All partial Evil, univerſal Good:
" And Spite of Pride, in erring Reaſon's Spite,
" One Truth is clear; Whatever is, is Right."

God's Works are only perfect in their Kind.
To Wiſdom's Ear 'tis Senſe and Sweetneſs all:
Darkneſs and Diſſonance to vulgar Minds.

Theſe

better, that we do not admire them enough: It is our own Ignorance or Prejudice that makes us charge these Works of the Almighty, as Defects. — Whereas, it is fitter for such finite Creatures as we, to be humble and meek, and jealous of our own Judgement, when it thus opposeth infinite Wisdom. Let us remember how few things we know, — how many we err about — and how many we are ignorant of: and Those, many of them, the most familiar, obvious things: Things that we see and handle at Pleasure: indeed, our own very Bodies, and that very Part of us, whereby we understand at all, our Soul. And shall we, therefore, pretend to censure what God doth! and amend his Work! — or to advise infinite Wisdom! Or to know the Ends and Purposes of his infinite Will, as if we were of his Council! and wiser than He! — No, let us bear in Mind that these Objections are the Products, not of Reason, but of Peevishness. "Who

Those only who are endued with a true Greatness of Soul and Genius can divest themselves of the little Images of Ridicule, and admire Nature in her Simplicity and Plainness. As for the little conceited Wits of the Age, who can only show their Judgment by finding Fault, they cannot be supposed to admire the Productions which have nothing to recommend them but the Beauties of Nature, when they do not know how to relish even those Compositions that, with all the Beauties of Nature, have all the additional Advantages of Art with them.

" Who are we, that we ſhould reply againſt God; Shall the thing formed, ſay to him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me thus?" — If the Almighty Lord of the Univerſe had, for his own Pleaſure, made this World of ours, more inconvenient for us than it is, it would better become us to ſit-ſtill, and lament our own great and manifold Infirmities and Failings, which deſerve a worſe Place, and a more incommodious Habitation than we here meet-with, in this elegant, this well-contrived, well-formed World, in which we find every thing neceſſary for our Uſe, Profit, or Pleaſure; and in which there is nothing wanting to make us happy as long as we are here; there being abundantly enough to entertain the Minds of the moſt contemplative, - Glories enough to pleaſe the Eye of the moſt curious and inquiſitive, (A) - Harmonies & Concerts of Nature's own, and Man's making, ſufficient to delight the Ear of the moſt harmonious and muſical; - all Sorts of pleaſant Guſtos, to gratify the Taſte & Appetite even

(A) —— —— " Who can paint
" Like Nature? Can Imagination boaſt,
" Ami'd his gay Creation, Hues like theſe?
" And can he mix them with that matchleſs Skill,
" And lay them on ſo delicately fine,
" And loſe them in each other, as appears
" In every Bud that blows?" ——

even of the most luxurious; (A) — & fragrant Odours to please the nicest & tenderest Smell: — In a Word, Enough to make us love and delight in this World, rather too much, than too little, considering how nearly we are allied to another. — The Clouds dispense their Moisture (B) evenly thro' the universal Garden;

(A) "Nature, providing for all Occasions, has made such ample "Provision for the Gratification of our Appetites, that, in some In-"stances, Providence herself seems to have been an Epicurean."

Cic. de Nat. De.

A bold Figure, but at the same Time, just and beautiful.

(B) This Circumstance, amidst an Abundance of other delicate and edifying Remarks upon the Wonders of Nature, is finely touched in the *Philosophical Transactions*, recorded in the Book of *Job*, Chapter xxxviii. Verse 25. - - פלג שטף *Who hath divided a Water-Course for the overflowing of Waters?* — The *Hebrew* is so pregnant and rich with Sense, that no *Translation* can do it Justice. The following *Paraphrase*, perhaps, may represent the principal Ideas comprehended in the expressive Original - - Who has *branched out*, and, with admirable Judgment, *disposed* a Variety of *Aqueducts*, for that immense Collection of Waters which float in the Sky? Who *distributes* those pendulous Floods thro' all the Borders of the Earth? distributes them, not in dreadful Cataracts, or *promiscuous* Gluts of Rain, but in kindly Drops and refreshing Showers; with as much *Regularity* and *Œconomy*, as if they were conveyed by *Pipes* from a *Conduit*? To whom shall we ascribe that Niceness of Contrivance, which now emits, now restrains them; sometimes derives their humid Train to one Place, sometimes to another; dispenseth them to *this* Soil in larger, to *that* in smaller Communications; and, in a Word, so manages the mighty Fluid, that every Spot is *supplied*, in exact Proportion to its Wants; none *destroyed* by an undistinguished Deluge? Serm. LXVIII.

Garden, and enliven, with their Showers, whatever our Hand plants. - The Fields are our exhauſtleſs Granary. - The Ocean is our vaſt Reſervoir. - The Animals ſpend their Strength to diſpach our Buſineſs: reſign their Cloathing and Lives, to provide for Food & Raiment. - In ſhort, every Element is a Store-Houſe of Conveniencies; - every Seaſon brings us the choiceſt Productions; - all Nature is our Caterer. And, (which is a moſt endearing Recommendation of theſe Favours,) they are all as lovely, as they are uſeful. We obſerve nothing mean or inelegant. All is clad in Beauty's faireſt Robe (A) and regulated by Proportion's niceſt Rule. The whole Scene exhibits a Fund of Pleaſures to Imagination, at the ſame Time that it more than ſupplies all our Wants. (B)

The Conſideration of this kindly Source of the Earth's Fertility, call'd forth thoſe melodious Strains from the ſweet Singer of Iſrael; "Thou viſiteſt the "Earth, and bleſſeſt it; Thou makeſt it very plen-"teous. Thou waterest her Furrows, Thou ſendeſt "Rain into the little Vallies thereof, Thou makeſt "it ſoft with the Drops of Rain; and bleſſeſt the In-"creaſe of it. Thou crowneſt the Year with thy "Goodneſs, and thy Clouds drop Fatneſs."

All theſe things are wonderful, & they only ceaſe to be ſo, by being obvious and familiar. It is the regular Courſe of what we call Nature, that excludes the Author and Conductor of it from our Thoughts; and we are ſeldom diſpoſed to think upon God; till we are awakened and alarmed by ſomething unuſual

God, than the Beauty of the Universe and the entire Connexion of all things therein.

Thunder and Lightning and Earthquakes, (which are astonishing Phænomena of Nature,) may perhaps terrify us into an Apprehension of a superior Power. But it is not in these tremendous Apearances of Power merely, that a good and well-instructed Man beholds the Creator of the World. - the constant and regular Working of his Hands; in the silent Operations of his Wisdom & Goodness, ever going-on through Nature, he delights to contemplate and adore him. This is a Proof of the Deity which attacks the Senses in the most sweet and agreeable, though, at the same Time, in the most forcible & convincing Manner. This presents us with the most lively and amiable View of our Maker; and whilst it persuades our Understandings of his Being and Existence, engages our Affections to adore and love Him. Indeed,

The very Existence of the Universe is a standing Memorial of the Goodness of the Creator. For, nothing except Goodness could originally prompt Creation. The Supreme Being, Self-existent and All-sufficient, had no Wants which he could seek to supply. No new Accession of Felicity or Glory was to result to him, from Creatures whom he made. It

Garden, and enliven with their Showers whatever and aſtoniſhing. But, Wiſdom will liſten to the "STILL Voice" of Nature; and in ſurveying the Works of God, will find out their Maker in all of them. "We cannot, indeed, by ſearching, find out the Almighty to Perfection;" nor can we in any wiſe, comprehend the amazing Machenism of his Works; but by a due Contemplation of them we ſhall arrive at a Knowledge more proper and uſeful for us: We ſhall be taught to diſcern, to magnify & adore the great Creator, who is mighty, beyond Imagination, in Power and Wiſdom; whoſe Ways are unſearchable, and whoſe Operation, in the Production of the minuteſt Herb, is paſt finding out.

There is nothing, then, &c. - (under)

There is nothing, then, that affords a more ſenſible Proof of the Exiſtence, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God,

(A) Perhaps it was from ſuch an Obſervation, that the Greeks, thoſe critical and refined Judges of Things, expreſs the *Mundane Syſtem*, by a Word, which ſignifies BEAUTY, ΚΟΣΜΟΣ.

(B) Thoſe ſeveral living Creatures which were made for our Service or Suſtenance at the ſame Time, either delight us with their Melody, furniſh us for Food, or raiſe pleaſing Ideas in us by the Beauty of their Appearance. Fountains, Lakes, and Rivers, are as refreſhing to the Imagination, as they are the Soil thro which they paſs.

See Spectator, Vol. 5. No. 387.

God, than the Beauty of the Universe and the entire Connexion of all things therein.

Thunder and Lightning and Earthquakes, (which are astonishing Phænomena of Nature,) may perhaps terrify us into an Apprehension of a superior Power. But it is not in these tremendous Apearances of Power merely, that a good and well-instructed Man beholds the Creator of the World. - the constant and regular Working of his Hands; in the silent Operations of his Wisdom & Goodness, ever going-on through Nature, he delights to contemplate and adore him. This is a Proof of the Deity which attacks the Senses in the most sweet and agreeable, though, at the same Time, in the most forcible & convincing Manner. This presents us with the most lively and amiable View of our Maker; and whilst it persuades our Understandings of his Being and Existence, engages our Affections to adore and love Him. Indeed,

The very Existence of the Universe is a standing Memorial of the Goodness of the Creator. For, nothing except Goodness could originally prompt Creation. The Supreme Being, Self-existent and All-sufficient, had no Wants which he could seek to supply. No new Accession of Felicity or Glory was to result to him, from Creatures whom he made. It

was Goodneſs, communicating and pouring itſelf forth, - Goodneſs delighting to impart Happineſs in all its Forms, which in the Beginning created the Heaven and the Earth. Hence thoſe innumerable Orders of living Creatures with which the Earth is ſtored; from the loweſt Claſs of ſenſitive Being, to the higheſt Rank of Reaſon & Intelligence. - Wherever there is Life, there alſo is ſome Degree of Happineſs; there are Enjoyments, ſuited to the different Powers of Feeling; and Earth, and Air, and "the great and wide Sea alſo," are with magnificent Liberality, made to teem with Life. (A)

Thus, from this ſingle Information, that "God made all things," we learn, that he is Self-exiſtent, Eternal, and All-mighty; perfect in Wiſdom, and unbounded in Goodneſs. — How many Truths, & how intereſting, ariſe from this Declaration!

Let us, then, apply them to the following Purpoſes of Meditation and Obedience, of Thankſgiving, holy Truſt, and a conſtant Remembrance of him.

Firſt, of Meditation. — The nobleſt Employment of the Mind of Man, is the Study of the Works of his

(A) He that would ſee more of this Reaſoning, may conſult the 9th Sermon of this Work, in Proof the Divine Exiſtence; and alſo Sermon the 26th, where the Beauty of the Creation is adduced in Proof of the Wiſdom of God.

his Creator. To him, whom the Science of Nature delighteth, every Object bringeth a Proof of his God; and every thing that proveth it, giveth Cauſe of Adoration. - His Mind is lifted to Heaven every Moment, and his Life is one continued Act of Devotion. — Caſteth he his Eye towards the Clouds, findeth he not the Heavens full of his Wonders? Looketh he down to the Earth, doth not the Worm proclaim to him, - "Leſs than Omnipotence could not have formed me."

While the Planets perform their Courſes; - while the Sun remaineth in his Place; - while the Comet wandereth thro' the liquid Air, and returneth to its deſtined Round again; Who but thy God, O Man! could have formed them? What but infinite Wiſdom could have appointed them their Laws? — Behold how awful their Splendour? yet do they not diminiſh: Lo, how rapid their Motions! yet one runneth not in the Way of another.

Look down upon the Earth, and ſee her Produce; examine her Bowels, and ſee what they contain; hath not Wiſdom and Power ordained the Whole? Who biddeth the Graſs to grow-up? Who watereth it at its due Seaſons? Behold the Ox croppeth it, the Horſe and the Mule, feed they not upon it? Who is He that provideth it for them? - Who

giveth Increaſe to the Corn, which thou ſoweſt? Who returneth it to thee a thouſand-fold? - Who ripeneth for thee the Olive in its Time? - and the Grape, tho' thou knoweſt not the Cauſe of it? - Can the meaneſt Fly create itſelf? - Or wert thou aught leſs than God, couldeſt thou have faſhioned it?

The Beaſts feel that they exiſt, but they wonder not at it; they rejoice in their Lives; but they know not that it ſhall end: - Each performeth its Courſe in Succeſſion; nor is there a Loſs of one Species in a thouſand Generations.

Thou who ſeeſt the Whole as admirable as its Parts, canſt thou better employ thine Eye, than in tracing out thy Creator's Greatneſs in them; - thy Mind, than in examining their Wonders? - Power and Mercy are diſplayed in their Formation; Juſtice and Goodneſs ſhine-forth in the Proviſion that is made for them: All are happy in their ſeveral Ways; nor envieth one the other.

What is the ſtudy of Words compared with This? In what Science is Knowledge, but in the Study of Nature? - When thou haſt admired the Fabric, inquire into its Uſe; for know that the Earth produceth nothing but may be of Good to thee. Are not Food and Raiment, and the Remedies for Diſeaſes, all of them derived from this Source alone?

Who

Who is wiſe, then, but He that knoweth it? Who hath Underſtanding, but He that contemplateth it? - For the reſt, whatever Science hath moſt Utility, whatever Knowledge hath leaſt Vanity, prefer theſe unto the others, for thine own, and thy Neighbour's Good.

To live, and to die; - to command, and to obey; - to do, and to ſuffer: are not theſe, All that thou haſt further to care about? Morality ſhall teach thee theſe - and Day after Day ſhall lay them before thee. — Behold, they are written in thine Heart, and thou needeſt only to be reminded of them; They are eaſy of Conception; be attentive & thou ſhalt retain them. — All other Sciences are vain; all other Knowledge is Boaſt; - Lo, it is not neceſſary or beneficial to Man; nor doth it make him more good, or more honeſt. - Piety to our God, and Benevolence to our Fellow-Creatures, are they not our great Duties? - and what ſhall teach us the one, like the ſtudy of God's Works? or what ſhall inform us of the other, like the Underſtanding our Dependencies in the Rank of Beings? But,

adly, Of Obedience. — Of all the Titles to Legiſlation and Rule, none is ſo evident and direct as that of a Creator. - The Conviction is felt in every Breaſt, that He who gave us Being, hath an abſolute

Right to regulate our Conduct. This gives a Sanction to the Precepts of God, which the moſt Hardened dare not controvert. - When it is a Creator and a Father that ſpeaks, who would not liſten & obey? Can we, after the exceeding Favour of Creation, from being called from Darkneſs to Light, and from thoughtleſs inactive Matter, "by the Power of God," to Life; can we, after this his abundant Kindneſs, refuſe to live to his Glory? - Gratitude forbids it.

But further; Let us not only obey; but obey with the voice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving this our God, "who alone doth wonderful Works, and marvelous to behold."

As the Wiſdom of God has thought fit in his holy Word to draw Variety of religious Inſtructions from the Conſideration of his Works and frequently ſends us to learn our Duty from the irrational and inanimate Parts of the Creation, we ought not to be aſhamed to go to the School of Nature, and to get Underſtanding from the Fowls of the Air and Lilies of the Field; ſince they are able to read us wiſe Lectures of Morality, and to improve us even in the Virtues of a Chriſtian, (A) They will teach us Dependence

(A) There is not a ſingle Part of the Earth, or a living Thing that moveth upon the Face of it, from which we may not gather Inſtruction

Dependence upon Providence, & Gratitude to it, for our daily Support, for the regular Supplies of Food & Raiment. They will teach us a Leſſon which many of the Philoſophers could not teach us, that we are not only the conſtant, but the peculiar Care of Providence; and that if a Sparrow doth not fall to the Ground without his Notice, how much more will he have a watchful Eye over his favourite Creature, Man, and not ſuffer him to wander unnoticed, unguided, unprotected! They will teach us what all ſhould remember, and all are apt to forget, [viz] how frail

we

ſtruction, if we will follow the Method of Reaſoning frequently made-uſe of, in Holy Writ. — Various Parts of the irrational & inanimate Creation are held-forth by the Wiſdom of God, to direct the Beings of Reaſon in the Way they ſhould go. The Prophet reproves the Ingratitude of the rebellious Iſraelites, by upbraiding them with the dutiful Behaviour and Fidelity of domeſtic Animals. "The Ox, (ſays he,) knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib; but Iſrael doth not know, my People will not conſider." And the Wiſe-Man ſends the indolent and ſlothful to learn Induſtry from the Example of an inconſiderable Inſect; "Go to the Ant, Thou Sluggard, conſider her Ways and be wiſe." Our Bleſſed Saviour deſcends to a yet lower Claſs in the Scale of Nature, and frequently ſets before us even things inanimate, to convey to us the moſt important and uſeful Leſſons of divine Inſtruction. In his Parables He makes uſe of the lifeleſs Emblems of Seed ſown, of a Fig-Tree, of a Grain of Muſtard-Seed, to diſcloſe the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. And not merely by Way of Illuſtration, but as a Precept to inſtruct, & as a Motive to perſuade, he directs his Diſciples to look-up to the Fowls of the Air, and obſerve how they are fed, and to "conſider the Lilies of the Field, how they grow.

we are, how precarious our Exiſtence is in this World, how momentary our Duration. But they will alſo teach us, that Life will riſe out of Corruption; that we ſhall ſpring up with freſh Recruits from the Grave, like Seed buried in the Ground; and ſhall be inveſted with Light in more glorious Raiment than the Lilies. Such Knowledge as this, lies open to the way-faring Man; it grows in every Field, and meets us in all our Paths. And it is the moſt important Knowledge that the wiſeſt of Men can purſue or gain; it is that which will make us wiſe unto Salvation.

Thoughts and Meditations of this Kind, are proper for all Men, who have the lively Scenes of Nature diſplayed before their Eyes. — It is, indeed, the Employment and Delight of the Angels themſelves, who ſang Hymns of Praiſes when they were firſt brought forth, and muſt for ever rejoice in the Contemplation of them, though doubtleſs they are, in many Reſpects, too wonderful even for their Comprehenſion. Surely then it muſt be a moſt rational, and pleaſing, and honourable Employment for thoſe who have Leiſure & Opportunity to acquaint themſelves with God in his Works; and eſpecially ſuch as were made for the Uſe, Convenience, and Gratification of Man.

It

It would be Stupidity, not to know the Value of his Gifts; and Ingratitude, not to apply them with Thankfulneſs to the Purpoſes for which they were beſtowed. And we ſhould much undervalue them, were we to think, that they were given merely to ſatisfy the ANIMAL Part of Man, and not likewiſe for the much greater Advantages of his Improvement in his INTELLECTUAL & MORAL Endowments. They were deſigned to exerciſe, and open, and enlarge his mental Faculties; and they will find ample Employment for his moſt curious Reſearches. But, after all, the Purſuit of Science, that bears no Fruit, and tends to no wiſe End, is a vain and uſeleſs Toil, and terminates in Pride and Folly. It is the religious Application of Knowledge that makes it valuable, and giveth true Wiſdom and Underſtanding.

Could we meaſure the Heavens, & tell the Number of the Stars, and call them all by their Names, without looking-up to their Creator, and magnifying and adoring the Immenſity of his Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs; our Knowledge would be worſe, and much more criminal, than Ignorance; Or could we ſpeak, like Solomon, "of every Herb, from the Cedar that is in Lebanon, unto the Hyſſop that ſpringeth out of the Wall;" - could we recoune the Names of all their Tribes, & diſtinguiſh all their Properties; and ſhould we yet overlook the Hand &

Design of Providence in their Formation, and not direct our Contemplation of them to the Praise and Glory of God, we should only foolishly indulge a fruitless Curiosity, and return empty & unfurnished from the spacious Fields of Science.

Was it not intended that this Love should lead us to the Adoration of God; why are his Works so formed for Admiration & Delight? Why such Order, Beauty, and Proportion in every Part of the Creation? - Why is the Eye delighted with Variety of Colouring; and why are Light and Shade so admirably mingled to produce that Variety? - Why are our Senses affected by Fragrance or Beauty, by Symmetry or Magnificence? - Why do we rejoice to behold the Glories of a rising, or a setting Sun? and why do we feel an awful Kind of Pleasure when we behold the Expance of Heaven covered with innumerable Stars? The Reason is obvious: The God of Nature formed our Senses to be affected by these Objects, that under the Influence of Love and Admiration, we might learn to adore the Wisdom that created them.

God is visible in all his Works, & therefore let us glorify him in all. The Heavens and the Earth, the Day and the Night, Summer & Winter, the Mountains and the Valleys, fruitful Trees and all Cedars,

and

and all green things upon the Earth, proclaim his Being and Providence, do him Homage, and praiſe him, and magnify him for ever. Such is the Language of Scripture; but they can only ſupply Materials of Adoration to intelligent Beings, & it is thro' the Mouth of Man that their Songs of Praiſe muſt be conveyed. (A) Let us, therefore, magnify him with Thankſgiving, tell of all his wonderous Works, and ſing Praiſes unto him with Underſtanding. Let us give Utterance to all the Works of Nature, and we ſhall all ſpeak the ſame Language, and join with one Voice in this triumphant Acclamation, "Great and marvellous are thy Works, O Lord God Almighty; in Wiſdom haſt thou made them all: the Earth is full of thy Riches!" &, "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive Honour, and Glory, & Power; for thou haſt created all things for thy Glory; and for thy Pleaſure they are, and were created!"

When we conſider with how much Labour and Difficulty human Power performs its inconſiderable Works; what Time it coſts to rear them; & how eaſily, when reared, they are deſtroyed; the very Idea of creating Power over-whelms the Mind with Awe. Let us look around and ſurvey this immenſe Globe,

(A) See Vol. iv. page 269, 270, &c.

Globe, which we have been admitted to inhabit, with all its various Parts - and conceive it launched at once from the Hands of the Almighty; made to revolve inceſſantly on its Axis, that it might produce the Viciſſitudes of Day & Night; thrown forth at the ſame Time to run its annual Courſe, in perpetual Circuit thro the Heavens; - After ſuch a Meditation, where is the Greatneſs? - Where is the Pride of Man? - Into what total Annihilation do we ſink, before an Omnipotent and Wiſe Being! In this Caſe, he who feels no Propenſity to worſhip and adore, is dead to all Senſe of Grandeur and Majeſty.

Indeed, Gratitude for Benefits received, is a Duty ſo natural and obvious, that one would imagine, it could hardly be neceſſary to mention it, much leſs to enlarge upon, and enforce it.

It is what we all of us expect from thoſe whom we have at any Time oblidged. - Shall we, then, refuſe to make that Return to our great Creator, the Author and Giver of every thing we enjoy, which we expect from thoſe of our Fellow-Creatures, on whom we have conferred any trivial Favour? - "If we being evil, know" what to expect for our inconſiderable Obligations, laid upon one another, "how much more" juſtly may a beneficent and good God demand the moſt hearty Acknowledgement from us, who are indebted to him, not only for the Power of

oblidging

obliging others, but "for Life, and Breath, and All Things?" — Indeed, We not only demand This of others; but, of Ourſelves alſo, are apt to magnify & extol the Kindneſs and Favours of Men, of Sinners and Fellow-Creatures. But, who are they? and what are their Favours? that they may be compared to our God, and to the Benefits which he hath done unto us? "What is Man, that we ſhould regard him? Or the Son of Man, that we ſhould be mindful of him;" when the Moſt-High God, (who hath made us, and who hath "eſtabliſhed the World by his Wiſdom, and ſtretched out the Heavens by his Underſtanding; who hath made all things in Number, Weight and Meaſure, . By whoſe Knowledge the Depths are broken up, and the Clouds drop down the Dew,") challengeth our Obedience, our Praiſe and Thankſgiving?

"O that Men would, therefore, Praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Childern of Men; that they would tell out his Works with Gladneſs, and ſhew forth his Praiſe with Thankſgiving." But,

"How ſhall we be able to magnify him? for He is great above all his Works: - The Lord is very great and marvelous." Therefore,

"When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will he far exceed: and

when you exalt him, put-forth all your Strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough. - For who hath ſeen him, that he might tell us? and who can magnify him as he is? For,

"There are yet hid greater things than theſe be, for we have ſeen but a few of his Works: - for the Lord hath made all things, and to the Godly hath he given Wiſdom."

"Bleſſed, therefore, be the Lord our God for ever and ever; and Bleſſed be his glorious Name, which is exalted far above all Bleſſing and Praiſe."

"The Lord is gracious and beneficent, He hath created the World in Mercy and Love, - his Goodneſs is conſpicuous in all his Works; he is the Fountain of Excellence, the Center of Perfection.

"The Creatures of his Hand declare his Goodneſs, and all their Enjoyments ſpeak his Praiſe; He clotheth them with Beauty, He ſupporteth them with Food, he preſerveth them with Pleaſure from Generation to Generation.

"If we lift up our Eyes to the Heavens, his Glory ſhineth forth; if we caſt them down upon the Earth, it is full of his Goodneſs: the Hills and the Valleys rejoice and ſing; Fields, Rivers, and Woods reſound his Praiſe.

"But thee O Man, he hath diſtinguiſh'd with peculiar Favour, and exalted thy Station above all Creatures.

tures. He hath endued thee with Reason, to maintain thy Dominion; he hath fitted thee with Language, to improve by Society; and exalted thy Mind with the Powers of Meditation, to contemplate and adore his inimitable Perfections. And,

"In the Laws he hath ordained, as the Rule of thy Life, so kindly hath he suited thy Duty to thy Nature, that Obedience to his Precepts is Happiness to thyself.

"O praise his Goodness with Songs of Thanksgiving, and meditate in Silence on the Wonders of his Love: Let thy Heart overflow with Gratitude and Acknowledgement, let the Language of thy Lips speak Praise and Adoration: - Let the Actions of thy Life show thy Love to his Law." But further,

As this is a NATURAL, so is it an EASY Duty.

We are not now, as God's People of Old were, burthened with expensive Observances and costly Sacrifices. The Almighty, tho' he "knows all the Fowls upon the Mountains; Tho all the Beasts of the Forests are his, and the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills; yet he will take no Bullock out of our House; nor He-Goat out of our Fold." Shall we not, then, freely offer unto him the unexpensive Return of Praise and Thanksgiving? and gratefully acknowledge that all we have, is from his inexhaustible Bounty.

Again, As we thank God for PAST Favours; So, on Account of his Power and Wiſdom manifeſted in the Creation, we may truſt him even in our WORST Affairs, for the Time to come.

When our Plans are diſſappointed, and our Heart is ready to diſpair; when Virtue is oppreſſed, and the Wicked proſper around us; In theſe Moments of Diſturbance, let us look-up to Him who created Heaven and Earth; and confide, that He who made Light to ſpring from primæval Darkneſs, will make Order at laſt to ariſe from the ſeeming Confuſion of the World.

Had any one beheld the Earth, in its State of Chaos, when the Elements lay mixed and confuſed; when "the Earth was without Form and Void, and Darkneſs was upon the Face of the Deep;" would he have believed, that it was preſently to become ſo fair and well-ordered a Globe as we now behold; illumined with the Splendour of the Sun, and decorated with all the Beauty of Nature? — The ſame powerful Hand, which perfected the Work of Creation, will, in due Time, diſembroil the Plans of Providence alſo.

Of Creation, we can judge more clearly, becauſe it ſtood-forth at once. It was perfect from the Beginning. But the Courſe of Providence is progreſ-

progreſſive. Time is required for the Progreſſion to advance; and before it is finiſhed, we can form no Judgment, or, at leaſt, a very imperfect one, concerning it. We muſt wait till the great Æra arrive, when the Secrets of the Univerſe ſhall be unfolded; when the divine Deſigns ſhall be conſummated; when Providence ſhall be brought to the ſame Completion, which Creation has already attained. Then, we have Reaſon to believe, that the wiſe Creator ſhall appear in the End, to have been the wiſe and juſt Ruler of the World.

Until that Period come, let us be contented and patient; let us ſubmit and adore. — "Altho thou ſayeſt thou ſhalt not ſee him, yet Judgment is before him; therefore, truſt thou in him."

Such, in general, are the Effects which Meditation on the Creation of the World ought to produce.

Obedience, - Thankſgiving, - and Truſt.

Let us, then, obey him, and praiſe his Holy Name, and retain a conſtant Remembrance of him in our Hearts: For, can we forget ſo great a Benefactor, & be unmindful of God that made us? Can we otherwiſe than remember the great Founder of our Beings; the Patron and Author of our Lives? "If I forget Thee, let my Right-Hand forget her Cunning: yea, if we prefer not God in our Mirth."

Serm. LXVIII. "Bleſs

" Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his Holy Name: Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits;" " for Thou haſt created all Things, and for thy Pleaſure they are, and were created."

Sermon

SERMON LXIX.

Preſervation.

Pſalm ciii. 4. "Who ſaveth thy Life from Deſtruction."

Next to the Acknowledgment of the Being and Exiſtence of God, there is nothing more eſſentially neceſſary to Religion than the Belief of his Providence, and a conſtant Dependance upon him, as the great Governor of the World, and wiſe Diſpoſer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the Sons of Men.

We have already conſidered God as Creator, and enforced it with what Conſiderations could be deduced: The great Benefit of Preſervation, therefore, comes now to be conſidered:

"Who ſaveth thy Life from Deſtruction."

The ſame Authority which repreſents God to us under the adorable Character of Creator, equally aſſures us, that, after forming the World, he withdrew not his Attention, nor left it entirely to the

Direction

Direction of general Laws; but continued, and will, to the End of Time continue to preſide over the univerſal Syſtem; ſuperintending it with unerring Wiſdom, & preſerving it with matchleſs Goodneſs.

This is a View of the Deity, highly intereſting to us: — In ſpeaking therefore to it, I ſhall obſerve the following Method:

First, I ſhall eſtabliſh the Doctrine in general.

II. Show what we are diſtinctly to underſtand by it in particular. — And then,

III. Obviate the Exceptions which have been uſually alledge againſt it.

Concluding, &c. (under)

much Time need not be employed in giving a ſatisfactory Anſwer to it.

Every One who reads, and acknowledges, (as I perſuade myſelf, we all of us do,) the divine Authority of the Scriptures, will readily allow, at leaſt in general, that the Being to whom we are indebted for every thing we poſſeſs, is God, "from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh." Indeed,

Intimations, & expreſs Aſſertions to the Purpoſe, occur ſo frequently in the ſacred Writings, that it would be almoſt endleſs, if not impoſſible to repeat them all; and indeed, they ſo readily offer themſelves

ves to every One's Memory, that it may be thought perhaps needleſs to repeat any of them. But,

"Say we theſe things" from Scripture only, or faith not Reaſon, & the very Light of Nature, "the ſame alſo?" Yes verily. "The Sound of an over-ruling Providence is gone out into all Lands, & the Belief of it into the Ends of the World. There is neither Speech nor Language, but this Voice," the Apprehenſion of an All-ſeeing Eye, & an All-powerful Superintendence, "is heard among them."

I ſhall, therefore, for the more full and perfect Diſcuſſion of this important Doctrine,

Firſt, Evidence it from Natural Light and Reaſon; And then,

Secondly, from Holy Writ, or divine Revelation; both which do abundantly confirm it.

That God governs the World by a PARTICULAR Will, is evident from Natural Light or Reaſon.

From the Two Principles already aſcertained, that "God is,"(A) and that He made the World,(B) it naturally follows, that he ſhould take care of it,(C) eſpecially

(A) Sermon IX. (B) Sermon LXVII.

(C) The World is not a Work, which the Author having put the Serm. LXIX. finiſhing

eſpecially of One of the nobleſt Parts of it, the Race of Mankind: For as "a ſingle Sparrow falls not to the Ground without the Permiſſion of their Father," is it not juſt to ſuppoſe that his Guard and Guidance is more particularly employed about his favourite Creature, Man; whom he had formed in his own Image, & is ſcripturally expreſſed, as "worth many Sparrows?" Indeed,

We cannot believe that he who employed ſo much Power and Wiſdom in the raiſing of this great and magnificent Pile, and furniſhing every Part of it with ſuch Variety of Creatures, ſo exquiſitely formed, and wiſely fitted for the Uſe and Service of one another, ſhould, as ſoon as he had perfected it, forſake his own Workmanſhip, & take no further Care of it: eſpecially conſidering, that it is no Trouble or Diſquiet to him, either to take Notice of what is done here below, or to interpoſe for the regulating of any Diſorder that may happen; for, infinite Knowledge, Wiſdom, & Power, can do This with all imaginable Eaſe, inaſmuch as God knows all things, and can do all things without the leaſt Diſturbance to his Happineſs; for, "He ſpeaks the Word only, and it is done." The

finiſhing Hand to, can ſubſiſt by itſelf without any Care or Interpoſition of his Providence; but muſt be upheld and directed by the continued Influence of the ſame Power which firſt gave it Being.

The whole Universe, then, subsists by the Word of God's Power, and all the Parts of it, with their various Motions and Changes, are so directed by his mighty Providence, as to answer the Ends for which they were made. Indeed,

Some of the greatest and most common Appearances of Nature are not to be accounted for otherwise, than by the Interposition of Divine Providence. (A) And, tho This is oftentimes the less attended to, because of the apparent Uniformity in the Course of things, (which perhaps unthoughtful Men may consider as if they followed by a kind of natural Necessity, rather than intelligent Direction,) yet a serious Reflection would satisfy us, that "the Hand of the Lord does all these things;" — That it is Divine Providence which upholds the Order of the World, and rules the Course of Nature; — "which makes the Day-Spring know its Place, and stretches out the Shadows of the Evening; — that commands the Sun to shine by Day, and the Moon by Night; — that prepares a Place for the Rain, and a Way for the Lightning & Thunder; — that maketh the Herbs to grow upon the Earth," and brings the Fruits to Perfection; — that fixeth the Limits of the Sea and the Earth. The

(A) See the second Paragraph in No. 119. of the Spectator.

The Providence of God does all this as truly, and by as real an Efficiency, as if there were no Order and Dependence of things, no general Laws by which they are governed, but the Appearances of every Moment were ſo many ſeparate, independent Effects, requiring each a ſeveral Cauſe, or at leaſt, a ſeveral unconnected Exertion of Power to produce them.

The Wiſdom of God is conſpicuous in the Simplicity of his providential Adminiſtration.

When we ſee a Train of Events following each other in ordinary Succeſſion, and a Multitude of Effects depend on one Cauſe, it gives us a delightful Idea of wiſe and ſteady Counſel in the Government of the World; and we are thereby directed to form our Schemes, and take the Meaſures of our Conduct in Life. But,

It would be extremely ſtupid and wrong ſo to engage our Attention to the ſettled Courſe of Events, as thereby to overlook the inviſible Power which governs them, "not to behold the Majeſty of the Lord, nor regard the Operations of his Hands."

Yet, God does not confine himſelf to what are commonly called the Laws of Nature, really no more than to the ordinary Series of his own Operations; (for inanimate things, which we are here conſidering,

ſidering, do not properly obey Laws, they are ruled only by an immediate Influence of Power, which they cannot reſiſt.) But, God is not confined to theſe, for he ſometimes acts againſt the common Courſe of Nature, in Order to awaken the Attention of Men by an extraordinary Interpoſition, to excite them to their Duty. — As in the great Flood, whereby "the whole World of the ungodly was overthrown;" - the conſuming of Sodom and Gomorrah by Fire from Heaven; - the dividing of the "Red Sea;" - the terrible Convulſions of Nature at the giving of the Law in the Wilderneſs; - the preternatural Events which accompanied the Death and Reſurrection of our Saviour, and many miraculous Works done by him and his Apoſtles, of which we have clear hiſtorical Evidence.

Theſe are Proofs beyond Diſpute, of the Divine Interpoſition in the Affairs of the World.

But further, The Suppoſition that God governs the World and that his Providence is concerned for the Order & Preſervation of it, is the Foundation of almoſt all religious Duties. — In denying the Providence of God, we to all Intents deny his Exiſtence: For, What is the Deity to us, if he never interferes, nor concerns himſelf with human Affairs, regardleſs of Virtue, and regardleſs of Vice; equally

indiſpoſed either to puniſh, or reward?

As Creator, we may contemplate him as a great and wonderful Being; but as Preſerver, we fall down, worſhip, and adore him as our Lord and Father.

The Belief, then, of the Providence of God, is the great Foundation of Religion. - Indeed, unleſs God did thus preſide and govern, there could be no ſuch thing as Religion: For, all Religion is founded upon the Opinion, that God hears, ſees, and regards our Services; and if we could but once ſuppoſe that he doth not, theſe would be wholly at an End.

For, it is upon this Account, that Men pray to God for the Good they want, and to be freed from the Evils they fear, becauſe they believe, that he always regards and hears them. — Men make Conſcience of their Duty, becauſe they believe that God obſerves them, and that he will reward or puniſh them according to their Deſerts.

So that take-away the Providence of God, we thereby deſtroy all That, whereon Religon ſtands; and alſo rob ourſelves of One of the greateſt Comforts, and beſt Refuges in the Afflictions and Calamities of this Life, and of all our Hopes of Happineſs in the next.

The more conſiderate and wiſe among the Heathens were convinced of this Truth: Cicero's Wri-

tings

tings are full of it: He well knew its Importance to Mankind, when rightly and thoroughly received.

Thus doth Natural Light and Reason convince us of a superintending Providence. But,

Secondly, Revelation abundantly confirms it.

Whatever Doubts and Uncertainties unassisted Reason might have left Men in, concerning the Assurance and Extent of God's Goodness herein, before God was pleased, by a particular Revelation, to reveal to Mankind his Care and Providence over us, divine Revelation hath now rectified all Imperfections happily; and hath satisfied us, that God in his abundant Goodness extends his Care, not only to the great and more important Matters, but descends to all, even the smallest Particulars, to the least things, and most inconsiderable.

Some of the ancient Heathens, indeed, through a mistaken Zeal for the Dignity, Ease, and Honour of God, exempted from his Inspection, the smaller Matters of the World: "The Gods, (say they,) overlook every Man's LESSER Affairs, and regard not every Man's LITTLE Property."

Such imperfect Apprehensions had they of the Providence of God; and tho they would seem hereby to consult the Dignity and Ease of the Deity, by

exempting from his Care the Trouble of things more minute; yet, in Reality, they did, by this Means, caſt a diſhonourable Reflection upon him, as if it were a Burthen to a God of infinite Knowledge, Power, and Goodneſs, to take-care of every thing.

This Imperfection of their's, divine Revelation hath fully & amply rectified, by aſſuring us of God's particular Care of all Perſons, and all Events.

The ſacred Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament inform us continually, in the ſtrongeſt Terms and by the moſt lively Proofs, of the Providence of God, and of his watchful Attention to the Concerns of the natural and intellectual World.

The Hiſtory, indeed, of the Old Teſtament might well be called "a Hiſtory of God's Providence;" ſince therein we behold him ſuperintending and directing the Affairs of Men in general, and of the Jews in particular; controuling, reverſing, and overruling the whole Syſtem of Nature, cauſing Deluges to deſtroy the whole impious Race of Mankind, few, (i.e eight Perſons,) only excepted, whom his particular Will miraculouſly preſerved; - Fire from Heaven to conſume wicked Cities; - Earthquakes and divers Wonders to deſtroy the ungodly; - Water to divide and ſtand on Heaps for the Preſervation of his People; - and Food and Health to drop

drop from the Clouds for their Support. (A) But,

Capital and important as this Article of Faith is to Mankind, we are not left to collect it from Examples, or to deduce it from hiſtorical Facts only. It is inculcated by the divine Lips of eſſential Truth itſelf, in Terms at once the moſt expreſſive and comfortable.

He aſſures us, that the Father of the Univerſe preſides over his Creation with a ſingular and unwearied Attention; with a Providence, not leſs particular

(A) The Book of Job, (it is thought,) is the moſt ancient of all others, and much older than Moſes; yet it is written with as lively a Senſe of the Providence of God, as noble Figures and Flights of Eloquence, as perhaps any Book extant.

God, to convince Job of his Ignorance in the Secrets of Nature & Providence, poſes him with many hard Queſtions, and this among the reſt, — "Haſt thou entered into the Treaſures of the *Snow*, or haſt thou ſeen the Treaſures of *Hail*, which I have reſerved againſt the Day of Battle and War?" — The Meaning of it is, that the Providence of God does ſometimes interpoſe to determine the Events of War, by governing the Seaſons, and the Weather, by "making *Snow* and *Rain*, "the *Wind* and *Storms* to fulfil his Word, and execute his Pleaſure."

Of this we have a remarkable Inſtance in the Defeat of *SISERA's* Army, againſt whom, in the Song of Deborah, "The *Stars* are ſaid to have fought in their Courſes."

Tho' the Expreſſion be poetical, yet the plain Meaning is, that by mighty and ſudden Rains, which the common Opinion aſcribed to the Influence of the Stars, the River *Kiſhon*, near which Siſera's Army lay, was ſo raiſed, as to drown the greateſt Part of that great Hoſt. "The "Stars in their Courſes, (ſays Deborah,) fought againſt them, and the "River Kiſhon ſwept them away." Serm. LXIX.

ticular, than gracious: That Sparrows; - that Ravens; - that Lilies; - that the Birds of the Air; - that the Flowers of the Field, are not beneath his Attention & Notice: Indeed, that "the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered." — And! After This, can we want any further Information: — After This, can we want any further Defence?

It is God alone, then, who ſteadily conducts the Motions of this great Machine, the minuteſt Movements of which are ſubject to his Inſpection, & wait his Orders. And, as "He is a God of Order, & not of Confuſion," He therefore orderly makes SECOND Cauſes to act regularly and uniformly to their natural Tendencies: yet, whenever He pleaſes, He can alter or ſuſpend, He can retard or haſten their Motions and Operations, whenſoever, and howſoever He pleaſes. "Whatſoever the Lord pleaſes, That doth he in Heaven, and in Earth, in the Sea, and in all deep Places." "He bringeth forth the Clouds from the Ends of the World, & ſendeth forth Lightnings with the Rain, bringing the Winds out of his Treaſures." — "He doth according to his Will, both in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth." The whole Creation is ſo abſolutely at his Diſpoſal, that thoſe ſeemingly moſt unruly & untractable Parts of it, "the Winds and the Sea obey him."

This

This is the Doctrine of the divinely inspired Writers; concerning whom it is further observable, that they have in their very Writings not only taught us the Doctrine of Providence, but also given us a full and demonstrative Proof of it, in those many clear and exact Predictions of future Contingencies, which by the divine Spirit they have delivered to the World many Ages before the things themselves came to pass. Now Prophecy is an irrefragable Argument of Providence; for if God foresees the Actions of Men before they are done, he cannot but see them in the doing; and those good or evil things, which before-hand he tells shall befal Men, or may befal, when they happen, are the Effects of his Providence.

To this Doctrine of the holy Scriptures concerning the Providence of God, all the civilized Heathen Nations (under)

[illegible] strictly speaking [illegible] necessarily requires the continued Influence, and perpetual Support of its Creator; - This does in no Way argue any Defect in the Workmanship, because an independent System of Creatures is not only absurd, but utterly impossible.

How this is done, and how the Providence of God is exercised over the several Parts of the Creation, comes now to be considered.

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have given their Suffrage, not only in Words (which is more) in Fact and Practice. For tho' some conceited and contentious Philosophers have ventured to dispute against Providence; yet they could never by all their Sophistry, so far prevail against the Reason of Mankind, and the Force of primitive Tradition, as to eradicate the settled Belief of it. But the Generality of Men in every Age & Nation, not wholly degenerated into Brutishness, have still practised upon a Supposition of a Divine Providence over-seeing and governing the Concerns of Men. — Upon the Whole,

To acknowledge a Deity, and yet to suppose that He is altogether, &c. (under)

He is altogether unconcerned either in the Creation or Government of the World, is owning him in Words, and denying him in Reality. — In like Manner, to confess that God made the World, and all things therein, and at the same Time deny his Care and Providence over it, is, in Effect, maintaining a God, & destroying his Attributes. — It is maintaining inconsistent Opinions and separating things essentially united.

As sure as there is a God, so sure it is, that He must be supremely wise, and infinitely good; but to create the World, and then leave it to itself, and to all the Confusion consequent upon it, is a Conduct impossible to be reconciled with either of these Perfections. — Indeed,

Strictly speaking, the Creation necessarily requires the continued Influence, and perpetual Support of its Creator; - This does in no Way argue any Defect in the Workmanship, because an independent System of Creatures is not only absurd, but utterly impossible.

How this is done, and how the Providence of God is exercised over the several Parts of the Creation, comes now to be considered.

The Apoſtle affirms that "in Him we live, and move, and have our Being."

Not that he means this in the Pantheiſtic Senſe, as if God was the only Subſtance in the Univerſe, and we and all other things whatſoever exiſted in him, as Parts, or Portions, or Modifications, of his Subſtance. On the contrary, he plainly diſtinguiſhes between the Maker and the thing made; and is ſo far from thinking, that the Univerſe, or whole Syſtem of Beings, is the only God, that, according to his Doctrine, they are the Creatures only of his Power, ſtill entirely dependent upon his Will, and all the rational free Part of them accountable to him for their Actions. We are not Parts or Members of God, but we are his Offspring, whom he hath freely brought into Being; and we do not neceſſarily exiſt in his Subſtance, but are graciouſly preſerved by his Power and Goodneſs; who, as he firſt conferred Being on us, is ſtill intimately near to ſupport us in it, & gives us Life, and Breath, & all things.

For the clearer Apprehenſion of this Point, it is uſually diſtinguiſhed into divine Preſervation, ſtrictly ſo called; Co-operation, or Concurrence; and Government.

Preſervation is that Act of Providence, by which all

all things are supported and upheld in their Existence; or the continuing to them that Being which the Act of Creation conferred. And it has been a Maxim generally received, that Preservation is not an Action really distinct from Creation, but (*Creatio quæ Continuata*) a Sort of continued Creation. And in a qualified Sense this is certainly true. But there is no Necessity to understand it so, as to conclude from hence, that Creatures have any natural Tendency to Annihilation; as if a State of Existence was a State of Violence to them, and that they would of themselves fall back again every Moment into nothing, unless prevented by some positive Act of Preservation. That Dependence is included in the Idea of a Creature, is a Point which will hardly be denied. But the Question is, what is to be understood by this Dependence, and how far it extends?

It is certainly in the Power of God to annihilate the Creatures he has made, at any Time, whenever he pleases. But to say that in that Case no positive Act of Power need be exerted, because nothing is produced, seems to be a mere Quibble upon the Word. Here is certainly a very strange and wonderful Effect, a Passage from Being to Not-being, a Change from Existence into Nothing. To produce such a Change as this, seems to be above the

Power of any created Nature. No Creature can annihilate itſelf; no Creature can annihilate another. It is the ſole Privilege of that Omnipotence, which firſt gave them Being, to be able to take it away. And his not taking it away, and reducing them again into nothing, which is every Moment in his Power, is called his negative Preſervation.

What poſitive Act or Influx of Power, over and above this, is neceſſary to ſuſtain them, is a Point which perhaps we are not able to determine. But it ſeems moſt probable, that they are upheld in their Exiſtence by the general and ordinary Concurrence of Providence, and as they have no Tendency to Annihilation in themſelves, will continue to exiſt, in ſome Shape or other, forever; unleſs God puts a Period to their Being, by an extraordinary Exerciſe of his Power. But this is a Sort of Metaphyſical Speculation, to which neither the Words of the Text, nor thoſe of the Apoſtle, juſt cited, do extend. They relate not to the mere Exiſtence of things in general, but of the Preſervation of Mankind in that Order, and Rank, & Condition of Life and Being in which it pleaſed God at firſt to create them. And,

In this larger and more popular Senſe of Preſervation, is included alſo that other Act of Providence, called

called Co-operation or Concurrence. This ſuppoſes us not only in Being, but in Well-being; enables us not only [illegible], and gives us the Power of performing all the Functions of animal Life, and all the Actions of our reaſonable Nature. The human Body is a moſt curious Machine, informed and actuated by an immortal Spirit. The Union of theſe ſo different Natures, is a Myſtery to Man, from the Beginning to the End. He knows neither when it commences, nor how it is continued; and when it pleaſes God to diſſolve it, "there is no Man that hath Power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit, neither hath he Power in the Day of Death."

They, who have moſt accurately conſidered the Frame and Structure of the Body, the Materials of which it conſiſts, and the Manner of its Compoſition, the infinite Variety and Number of its Parts, and the hardly leſs infinite Variety of Accidents to which it is expoſed, have thought it little leſs than a Miracle, that it is not deſtroyed almoſt every Day. We "dwell in Houſes of Clay, (ſays Job,) whoſe Foundation is in the Duſt, which are cruſhed before the Moth." And yet into how many Members, into what various Veſſels, and Tubes, and Nerves, and Fibres, are theſe Materials diſpoſed, and wrought up with exquiſite Delicacy and Contrivance? The

Bones alone are reckoned in Number not much fewer than three hundred; very liable, many of them, to be diſlocated, or broken. And yet there is a Power, which ſo well preſerves them, that the Generality of People can ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "He keepeth all his Bones, ſo that not one of them is broken." How many Parts and ſecret Operations muſt concur to animal Nutrition and Secretion? any Diſorder or Interruption of which muſt ſoon be fatal. How nice an Affair is the Circulation of the Blood: how delicate and tender the Contexture of the Brain? This indeed, in ſome Caſes, may be highly injured, and yet the Animal may live & be nouriſhed. But then all the Actions of rational Life are at an End, and the Philoſopher and the Man are dead already. Our whole Exiſtence here depends upon the Motion of the Heart, and the Circulation of the Blood; and how much leſs than a Miracle is it, that the One can preſerve its Force, and the Other its Flux and Reflux, for ſo many Days, for ſo many Years together? And whenever "the ſilver Cord is looſed, or golden Bowl is broken, or the Pitcher broken at the Fountain, or the Wheel broken at the Ciſtern; then does the Duſt return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit unto God who gave it." — But,

Beſides this internal Frame, to how many exter-

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nal Accidents is the Body, the Life and Health of Man here perpetually exposed? To how many Hurts and Diseases is it subject, from what the Physicians call the NON-NATURALS; which, though there is no living without them, are easily turned into the Seeds and Sources of Diseases and Death, such as Air, and Exercise, and Food, and Sleep, and the like. How happy is it for us, that there is a wise over-ruling Power, who can preserve us from the ill Effects of unwholesome Diet and infectious Air, from Pestilence and from Poison, and from numberless Evils and destructive Accidents, which we can neither prevent nor foresee! "The Lord himself is our Keeper, who preserves our going out and our coming in; and when we lie down in Peace to take our rest, it is He only that maketh us to dwell in Safety."

The last Act of Providence included in the general Sense of divine Preservation, is Government, God's Government of the World, his disposing, ordering, and ruling over all things in it.

As the Subjects of his universal Kingdom are of different Sorts, he governs them by different Measures, by Power, by Instincts, and by Laws. Not that we mean by this to say, that these absolutely exclude one another in their respective Cases, but

only name the Diſtinction, from what is predominant in each. God governs the inanimate Parts of the Univerſe by Power; but then, in the Direction and Exerciſe of this, are certain Laws obſerved, which reſult from their Nature, or which he has preſcribed to his own Operation. Laws are properly notional things, which cannot execute themſelves, and cannot be obeyed by ſenſeleſs Matter. But God is every where, and infinitely active; and the Effects which are every where and uniformly produced through the whole Syſtem of Matter, are the ſtrongeſt Proofs of their Kind, both of his Ubiquity and his Power. It is true in ſtrict Philoſophy, and not merely an Idiom of Speech, that "he maketh his Sun to riſe, and ſendeth Rain on the Earth" he commandeth, and raiſeth the ſtormy Wind, which lifteth up the Waves of the Deep; and, when he pleaſes, "he maketh the Storm a Calm, ſo that the Waves thereof are ſtill." But as Mankind would be perpetually bewildered and at a Loſs, unleſs there were ſomething of an eſtabliſhed Conſtitution and Courſe of Nature, ſo, though "God does whatever he pleaſes, both in Heaven and in Earth, and in the Sea, and in all deep Places," yet his Actions are under the wiſeſt Regulation, and to the whole Series and Subordination of ſecond Cauſes, to

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all Motions of Matter, and all the Instruments concerned in working the grand Machine of Nature, he has prescribed a Law, which shall not be broken.

It is a Law of a similar Nature, which influences the Actions of mere Animals. They are directed to preserve themselves, and multiply their Kind, by a Principle, which, if it must be called Reason, ought to be considered as the Reason of God. "The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests;" but those of the same Species, in the same Climate, always build them of the same Materials, and in the same Form. That universal Sameness and Uniformity in all their Operations, shows plainly, that their Instinct is different from Reason; or if it be Reason, it is a Reason foreign to them, of which they have not the proper Exercise and free Direction. For the Productions of Reason, under the Management of those who have the full Exercise of it, are diversified to an almost infinite Variety.

If we know not perfectly and positively what Instinct is, yet negatively, we know what it is not; and it serves sufficiently to distinguish the Tribes of brute Animals from mere Machines, on the one Hand, and from rational Creatures on the other. In Consequence of this natural Law, "the young Lions roar after their Prey, and seek their Meat from God, who giveth to

the Beaſt his Food, and feedeth the young Ravens that call upon him."

But, the proper Subjects of moral Government are intelligent and free Creatures, who are qualified by their Reaſon to know their Duty, and by their Liberty, to diſcharge it.

The Providence of God is indeed over all things on Earth, but not over all things alike. God takes Care of the very brute Creatures, but his Regard to Man is ſuch, that, in Compariſon of which, the holy Text ſeems to deny that he hath any Regard to things below him. "Doth God take care for Oxen?" ſaith the Apoſtle. Yea he doth; but he hath a far greater Regard to Men; and therefore that Law, "Thou ſhalt not muzzle the Ox that treadeth out the Corn," teacheth us not only that we ſhould do Right to our labouring Beaſts, but alſo, and much more, that we ſhould not defraud ſuch Men as by their Labours, eſpecially in the Work of the Goſpel, deſerve well at our Hands, of their due Reward, which is the Reaſoning of the Apoſtle in that Place. Hence it is, that the very Lives of the Brutes are permitted by Providence, yea given by the divine Law, to the Uſe and Service of Man.

Among Men there is a moſt eſpecial Providence of God over thoſe that are his Children, that imitate his Goodneſs,

Goodness, and walk in the Paths of Virtue and Righteousness. The divine Apostle tells us, "That the living God is ὁ σωτὴρ, the SAVIOUR, or Preserver, of all Men, but especially of those that believe."

Wonderful are the Expressions in Scripture of God's tender Care and Kindness towards good Men. Our Saviour tells us, that the very "Hairs of their Head are numbered;" (i.e) the very least Concerns of Good Men are regarded by God, nor will he suffer them to sustain the least Detriment in the Way of Piety and Righteousness, which shall not tend to their greater Good. God is said to be as tender of his People as a Man is of "the Apple of his Eye," of which every Man is careful that it receive not the least Hurt. And David prays to God for his especial Providence over himself, in the very same Phrase; "Shew thy marvellous loving Kindness, O thou that savest, by thy Right-hand, them which put their Trust in thee, from those that rise up against them; keep me as the Apple of thine Eye," i.e. (saith an ingenious Paraphrast,) "Let thy watchful and tender Providence fence and secure me from all Dangers, after the same Manner as Nature hath provided Eye-lids, for Guards to fence and preserve the Eye, wherein the visive Faculty is placed."

And, indeed, abundant is the Provision that God hath made for the Defence and Security of his faithful

Ones. The holy Angels themſelves are commanded to leave the heavenly bliſsful Habitations, and to hover over this Earth for their Protection and Preſervation. For they are ſtyled by the divine Author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, "miniſtering Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation."

How ſafe and happy, then, muſt the good Man needs be, under the Conduct of theſe wiſe, good, and powerful Guardians! How eaſily can they, how readily will they, upon the Command of our heavenly Father, preſerve us from Dangers, ſupply our Wants, direct our Courſes, and give a proſperous Iſſue to all our Affairs! In a Word, whether we look on the Providence of God over the Faithful in the Fountain or in the Streams, in the firſt Mover or in the inferior Wheels, in the principal Cauſe or in the Inſtruments; it appears every Way an abundant Proviſion for, and Security to them.

If the Notions aſſerted in this Part of the Diſcourſe have any Foundation in Truth, God's Right to govern Mankind can hardly be conteſted. His Creation of them at firſt, and his continual Preſervation of them, give him ſuch a Property in them, and Right of Dominion over them, that his Will, always directed by Wiſdom and Goodneſs, is their ſovereign Law. From hence ariſes an immediate Obligation to Obedience, and from this, the Suppoſition of Rewards and Puniſhments.

The Exceptions which have been commonly alledged againſt this Doctrine, will be the Subject of the next,

Sermon

SERMON LXX.

On the same Subject.

Psalm ciii. 4. "Who saveth thy Life from De-
"struction."

There is no Proposition in Nature more clearly and certainly capable of Demonstration, than the Existence of an eternal, infinitely wise, and powerful Cause, to whom all other Beings owe their Existence, and on whom they entirely depend. And, as it is not consistent with perfect Wisdom, to give Being to Creatures without some valuable End and Design, we may justly reason farther, that as he originally made them, he still continues to over-rule and govern them, in such a Manner as tends most effectually to answer the great Ends of their Creation. As these Truths have the deepest and strongest Foundation in Nature and Reason, so have they always had the Sanction and Authority of that general Consent of Mankind. Every Nation and People, where there was any Order, or Form of Government, had also some Profession of Religion; and wheresoever any Religion is professed, there must be some Notions of a God and Providence. — Accordingly,

Having already established this general Doctrine, and the distinct Exercise of it, I shall now proceed,

III.

III. To obviate the Exceptions which have been commonly made againſt it.

God, for the more clear Diſcovery of his Being & Exiſtence to us, and of his Operations and Dealings with Men, together with their Duty conſequent upon it, hath made a Revelation to us, in which we ſee him guiding and directing; and we are told by him that He doth, with the moſt minute Particularity, guide, govern, and direct the Affairs of the World. — And! Is not this ſufficient? Yes verily, and in all Reaſon. — But,

Whilſt the devout Worſhippers of God and his good Providence do with Thankfulneſs acknowledge his exceeding Goodneſs herein, there are others, who (to eſtabliſh their own Reaſon,) ſet at Nought the Wiſdom of God, & vainly object not only Impoſſibility againſt it, but even Matter of Fact alſo.

"If, (ſay they,) God governs the World with abſolute Power and with unerring Wiſdom, how comes it to paſs that there is ſo much Evil and Ignorance in it? — Would it not be more conſiſtent with his Goodneſs to extirpate Sin, and all Diſorders from it; & to enlighten Mankind with the Fulneſs of his Knowledge?" Indeed, further, "How is it poſſible, that ſuch an infinite Variety & Multitude of Beings, can all of them, at all Times, be regarded by him?"

As to the Firſt of theſe Objections, (which hath indeed, ſome Colour of Pretence in it,) it is eaſily obviated,

obviated, by saying, that God made Man a free Creature, capable either of rightly using or abusing his Liberty; and intends the present Life for a State of Tryal, in Order to another, where every Man shall receive the just Reward of his Deeds, whether of Obedience unto Life, or of Evil to everlasting Punishment.

To banish therefore from the World the Evil of Sin, (i.e) to make Man incapable of its Impressions, would be to disannul the Workmanship of his own Hands, and to "alter the thing that was gone out of his Mouth." — Indeed, This would destroy the Virtue of Obedience, and the Expediency of his Holy Word.

It pleased God, in his Wisdom, to make Man Free, and it is sufficient to answer all Objections herein, that God hath thought it best for us; but if to his Wisdom we add the gracious Influence of his Holy Spirit to aid and assist us in all good things, and the other Means of his Word and Ordinances to keep us from Sin, and lead us to the things which be profitable for us, (all which are more than a Counter-Balance for the Incitements to Sin,) "who are we, that we should reply against God?" (A)

What is thus said respecting the Evil of Sin, may in great Measure be applied to that of Ignorance also. God governs moral Agents by the Influence of his Spirit, by his Ministers, and by his Word and Sacraments; yet all these, being addressed to Free Agents, have therefore not an irresistible Force in them; tho the Law of God, if we will study it, is so plain, that "he that runneth may read it," and a way-faring Man, tho a Fool, shall not err therein."

As to Nations, to whom this Will of God is not yet

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yet revealed, "it is not for us to know the Times & Seasons which the Father hath put into his own Hands;" it is sufficient for us to know that there will be a Time, when "the Earth shall be covered with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea:" and that in the main Time, that these "having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves. And if they, by Nature, fulfil that Law, will judge us, who by the Letter do transgress it."

(A) See This already spoken to, Vol. iii. page 99.

As to the Irregularities & Diſorders of the World, God in his infinite Wiſdom knows what is Beſt for us.

"WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT." (A)

It is a Truth too plain, that we blame Providence for every ſlight and trivial Accident, and ſuffer Folly to baffle the Projects of true Wiſdom; but after all, ſhall not He, at whoſe Command all things were made, - ſhall not the great Sovereign and dread Sire of all the Earth do right?

It

(A) If Mr. *Pope* underſtands this Maxim according to the *Limitation* ſuggeſted above, he ſpeaks a moſt undeniable & glorious Truth. But if that great Poet includes whatever comes to paſs, thro' the wild and extravagant Paſſions of Men; ſurely no thinking Perſon, at leaſt no Chriſtian, can accede to his Opinion. — What God orders, is *wiſe* beyond all Poſſibility of Correction; and *good*, above all we can aſk or think. His Decrees are the Reſult of infinite Diſcernment; and his Diſpenſations the Iſſues of unbounded Benevolence. — But Man, fallen Man, is hurried away by his Luſts, into a thouſand Irregularities; which are deplorably evil *in themſelves*, and attended with *Conſequences* manifeſtly pernicious to Society.

Let the Sentiment, therefore, be reſtrained to the Diſpoſals of Heaven, & we moſt readily ſubſcribe it. But, if it be extended to the Conduct of Men and the Effects of their Folly; we think ourſelves obliged, to enter a Proteſt againſt it. For, whatever kindles the divine Indignation, - is Cauſe of final Ruin to the Author, - is ſtrictly forbidden by God's holy Word, - is contrary to the whole Deſign of his revealed Will, and the very Reverſe of his eſſential Attributes; - *This* cannot poſſibly be Right: *This* is moſt undoubtedly Wrong. Omnipotence, indeed, can over-rule it, and educe Good out of it: but the very Notion of *over-ruling*, ſuppoſes it to be abſolutely *wrong* in itſelf.

It is very often the Case, that the greatest Blessings are conveyed to us under the greatest Misfortunes. — How many have the Checks and Disappointments of Life, reclaimed from Error. (A) An uninterrupted Flow of Prosperity might tempt us to forget God, and our Duty; He therefore wisely dispenseth Afflictions to us, that we may know Ourselves, and God that made us.

The royal Psalmist gives an evident Proof of THIS in himself, when he says, "Before I was troubled, I went wrong, but now have I kept thy Word:" And again, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes."

The Benefits of Affliction, to those who make a right Use of it, are very great. — They put us upon examining our past Conduct, and amending the Errors of our Lives. - They prove to us the Sincerity of our Love to God, and what we are really at the Bottom. — They wean us from this World, and raise our Views and Desires towards Heaven & heavenly things.

"The Lord, then, chastens whom he loves, and corrects every Son whom he receives." If

(A) The Best need Afflictions for the Trial of their Virtues; should all things succeed to our Wishes, how should we show our Readiness to forgive others, as we ourselves desire to be forgiven? - &c. - Serm. LXIX.

If, therefore, we conſider that many of the Evils and Diſorders which we complain of, & which God permits to happen, are capable of being over-ruled by him to a greater Good, & are made many Times to ſerve wiſe & excellent Purpoſes, what Cauſe have we to complain? (A)

"Then ſay not Man's imperfect, Heav'n in Fault;
"Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought.
"His Being meaſur'd to his State and Place;
"His Time a Moment, and his Point a Space."

For, ſuppoſing another Life after this, wherein Men ſhall give an Account of their Actions, and receive the juſt Reward of their Deſerts, there will THEN be a proper Seaſon and full Opportunity for ſetting all things right; and no Man will then have Reaſon, either to "glorie in his Wickedneſs," or to complain at his Sufferings in this World. (B)

As

(A) See No. 237. of the Spectator. — See alſo Vol. iii. page 89. of this Work.

(B) The Defence of Providence is not wholly to be reſted on a future State, nor this World to be repreſented ſo extremely bad, as if nothing but Confuſion reigned in it. — There is a ſufficient Evidence to an impartial conſiderate Mind from the preſent Conſtitution of things, and the general providential Direction of worldly Affairs and Events; - from the Adjuſtment of inanimate things, their Powers and Effects, to the living, the ſenſitive and rational Part of the Creation; - the Powers and Inſtincts whereby theſe Latter are furniſhed, fitting them

As to the last Objection, concerning a GENERAL Providence, and the Impossibility of it, this ariseth from the Narrowness of Men's Minds, who have measured God, rather by their own scanty Capacity, than by That of infinite Perfection; which, when considered, will put an End to all further Doubtings about it. (A)

Our Eyes are dazzled with the superlative Lustre of the Sun: We cannot gaze, and retain our Sight; it is the same with the superlative Brightness of the Deity's Perfections.

Men cannot conceive how God can direct such an infinite Multiplicity of Affairs: - Can they conceive, (let

them for their proper Ends and Uses; which Ends are in a great Measure answered: These, and such like Considerations, are sufficient Evidences of Ruling-Wisdom, and Goodness in the World.

See No. 120. of the Spectator.

(A) The several Kinds of intelligent Beings in the World, have their limited Spheres of Perception and Activity: There is a determined Extent to which they can reach, & no further; a certain Number of Objects fall under their Observation, and their Perceptions of those Objects, & their Operations upon them, are of very different Kinds: but surely, The infinite and all-perfect Mind is infinitely advanced above this *limited* Capacity; and at once comprehends its own Works, and equally governs them. — The Being of a God, his Attributes, and supreme Sway of his Providence, are clearly evinced from the very Complication of terrestrial Affairs, which none but an infinite Understanding could ever prevent from falling into irretrievable Confusion.

Serm. LXIX.

(let them but for a Moment conſider,) how God by a Word created the Univerſe; or how He created it ALL; or how He could create ſuch an innumerable Variety of Creatures, of every Sort; & all perfect in their Kind? – Surely they cannot.

God, then, made all things at FIRST; and are things eaſier made, than preſerved? – Cannot He, who by the Word of his Power made all things from Nothing, as eaſily NOW, (when made,) "open his Hand, and fill all things living with Plenteouſneſs?" But,

What Abſurdity is it to acknowledge a God, "whoſe Ways are not as our Ways," to bring him to our Bar, and there meaſure his Perfections by our imperfect Capacities? — To acknowledge a God "with whom all things are poſſible," and yet retract him within our narrow Limits!

If we do but reflect on the Omniſcience, Omnipreſence, and Omnipotence of God, (Attributes neceſſarily belonging to Him,) we cannot but be confirmed herein. For,

Theſe Perfections being once rightly underſtood, it cannot but be evident, but that all things are alike eaſy to be known, inſpected, and performed by him, the minuteſt as well as the greateſt. Indeed, it will appear, that not only the ſmalleſt things are not unworthy

worthy of his Inspection and Providence, or tedious for him; but that even (in the Nature of things,) it is absolutely impossible but that He, who in Knowledge and Power is every where alike present, should observe and attend to every thing alike: For, wherever Life is, it will operate; and therefore, if God, who is all Life and Power, Knowledge, Activity and Spirit, be every where, that Operation must be an universal Providence. Indeed,

That it is inconceivable how all the Actions, yea the most inward Thoughts, of all Men, can, in the same Moment of Time, be taken Notice of by God, is an Objection so foolish, that any rational Man may well be ashamed of it.

It was as wisely as wittily said of One, That if the Brutes were capable of a Design to draw the Picture of God, they would draw him just like one of themselves: so these Men cannot, or rather will not, think of God, the Infinite and Almighty, under any other Notion than what is adequate to their own, not only finite, but feeble and weak, Measures.

Thou canst not conceive how God doth see and govern all things in this World; doth it therefore follow, He cannot or doth not so do? a ridiculous Consequence! The Beasts do not, cannot conceive how

and by what Maxims of Policy we Men frame and govern Kingdoms and Common-wealths, how we measure the Course of the Stars, and take Observation of the Heavenly Bodies; much less how we encourage of Religion and divine Matters. And yet we are sure we can do, and actually do all these things.

Now it is certain that we mortal Men are infinitely far inferior to the Supreme God than the Beasts are to us. — But let us see whether these great Pretenders to Reason may not be convinced of their Folly, even by Sense itself.

Thou that questionest the Possibility of God's Inspection of all things here upon Earth, look up and behold that glorious Luminary of Heaven, the Sun; see how, in the same Moment, it diffuseth its Light and Heat into all the several Parts of the wide Earth exposed to it, and shines thro every Crevice of every the most secret Place of it. Now, how canst thou see this wonderful diffusive Influence of a created Light, and not grant a far more extensive Efficacy to the Great Creator, the Father of Lights? But,

To come nearer to thee, — Consider the very Powers and Faculties that God hath given thee, and then thou canst never doubt of the Divine Power and Providence over thee. Do but open thine Eyes, and thou canst

canst, in a Moment, see to the ſtarry Heavens, tho at ſo vaſt a Diſtance from thee? Now, He that made thee ſee from Earth to Heaven, cannot He himſelf much more ſee from the higheſt Heaven to this Earth? And, if thou queſtioneſt how God can know thine Heart and ſecret Thoughts? we ask, How thou thyſelf comeſt to know them? Didſt thou not receive the very Faculty of knowing That, and all other things that are knowable by thee, from God? and could He make thee to know That which He himſelf cannot know?

This is the very Reaſoning of the divine Pſalmiſt, where he brings in wicked and profane Men thus ſlighting Divine Providence; "Yet they ſay, The Lord doth not ſee, neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard it." And then he excellently refutes them, "Underſtand ye Bruiſh among the People; and ye Fools, when will ye be wiſe? He that planted the Ear, ſhall He not hear? He that formed the Eye, ſhall He not ſee? He that nurtureth the Heathen, ſhall not He puniſh? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, ſhall not He know? The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that they are but vain."

The Foundation of which excellent Argument is this; Whatever Perfection there is in CREATED Things, it is from God the Creator, and therefore in Him it muſt needs be in an eminent Degree.

There is a certain determinate Number or Quantity of things, which every intelligent Creature, (according to the Proportion of its Sphere of Power and Activity,) is able to attend to. — And accordingly, Creatures of larger Capacities can obſerve a much greater Number of things, at one and the ſame Time, than Beings of a lower Rank can imagine it poſſible they ſhould.

Thus it is with the Sagacity of ſome Men above others: — And, if there be any Minds more perfect than the Human, (and who can be ſo conceited of himſelf, as to queſtion this?) They muſt have it in a ſtill more eminent Degree, proportionable to the Excellency of their Natures. — And,

Laſtly, If we allow, (as certainly we muſt,) this Power of diſcerning to be in God, proportionable to his Nature, as in lower Beings it is proportionable to their's, then it becomes infinite; and conſequently all things lie open before him.

God therefore can, with infinitely greater Eaſe, direct and govern all things in the World at once, than we, or even the wiſeſt amongſt us, can attend to thoſe few things which fall within the Compaſs of our ſhort Obſervation. — In a Word,

There

There is such a Connexion in things; (those of the greatest Consequence often arising from Matters of small and inconsiderable Moment,) that we cannot imagine a Providence, unless we believe EVERY thing to be within his Care and View. (*)

But to this it is further objected; and said, that, granting the Supposition that God can superintend and direct all things; yet it seems beneath his Majesty to take notice of the mean and low Concerns of Men.

This was the Opinion of a certain Sect among the ancient Philosophers; and accordingly, as they thought the Life of God consisted merely in Ease and doing nothing; so they willingly persuaded themselves that the Happiness of Man consisted in nothing but Vanity and Pleasure: They thought that God had no Regard to what Good or Evil was done by Men on Earth; and accordingly They themselves had no Regard to any things but Luxury and Pleasure; "They said in their Hearts, God hath forgotten, He hideth away his

(*) (under) Face, Regard. — In a Word,

The first Objection sets the Work of Providence, in the Government of this World, ABOVE God; This placeth

(*) See the 4th Section, to the End, of No. 393. of the Spectator, and No. 565.

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There

There is such a Supervision in things: (that of the Face, and will never see it. Tush, say they, does God perceive? Is there Knowledge in the Most High?"

The Psalmist speaks of such Persons, not who were absolute Atheists and thought that God knew not what they did at all; but who thought it BENEATH his Divine Majesty, to regard what Men did. But,

Before I proceed distinctly to answer this Pretence, I shall, &c. ☞ (under)

I shall, in general, observe that this and the foregoing, are directly opposite each to the other; for the former Objection supposed God TOO LITTLE to see and govern all the Actions and Concerns of Men; This makes him so GREAT and so HIGH, that it is beneath him to concern himself about them: In the former the Infidel pleads against Divine Providence, that it CANNOT take Notice of all things on Earth; in the latter he objects that God WILL NOT concern himself about the little Affairs of Men, as being unworthy of his Care and Regard. — In a Word,

The first Objection sets the Work of Providence, in the Government of this World, ABOVE God; This placeth

(*) See the 4th Section, to the End, of No. 293. of the Spectator, and No. 565.

placeth it BENEATH him. Thus Error always contradicts not only the Truth, but itſelf. But to proceed,

As the former Objection aſſaulted the Omniſcience of God, ſo This ſtrikes at his Goodneſs; and therefore, tho it be more ſpecious, is yet really as impious as the other.

From what Sort of Miſapprehenſion concerning God this proceeded, is not difficult to diſcover: They thought, (and ſo far, indeed, very juſtly,) that God could not but be a perfectly Happy Being, infinitely removed from all that Care and Labour, thoſe Difficulties and Anxieties, which make a great Part of the Miſery of human Nature. But muſt He therefore be altogether an Inactive Being? Cannot He, with the ſame Eaſe wherewith he made the World, (a Work of infinite Power, Wiſdom and Counſel,) ſubſiſt He with the ſame Eaſe govern it alſo and preſide over it? Cannot He, who in one View ſees & obſerves all things [illegible] and down from himſelf, and to give Being to the things that are, and to communicate his Goodneſs to each of them in ſuch Degrees as the ſame his infinite Wiſdom was pleaſed to aſſign; and from the ſame Goodneſs whereby he created things, he ſtill preſerves them, provides for them, and takes-care of them.

The

The Works of Creation and Providence are both equally a συγκατάβασις, (as ſome of the antient Fathers term it,) a Condeſcenſion in God; for, without Reſpect to his Goodneſs, the Heavenly Affairs are as well beneath his Care and Providence as the Concerns of Men on Earth; but yet ſuch is the Goodneſs of God, that He certainly takes-care of both.

The Inferences and Improvements to be made from the foregoing, are,

First, As from the Benefit of Creation, ſo from Preſervation alſo, do we infer the Nature and Perfections of God.

As the Benefit of Creation declares unto us the Being and Exiſtence of God, and his adorable Perfections; ſo here again, what View have we of the Deity! What infinite Wiſdom, what boundleſs Knowledge, what unlimited Power, matchleſs Goodneſs, unwearied Attention, Compaſſion, and Forbearance are neceſſary to conſtitute the mighty Preſerver of Mankind! — Inſpecting the Whole and every Part of the Univerſe, every Moment; — ordering it according to the Counſels of his infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, by his omnipotent Will! — unconfuſed in a Multi-

on Earth, yea the most glorious Creatures of Heaven, the Angels, are infinitely beneath the Majesty of God, the Creator of all things; but yet we say also, that whatsoever the infinite Majesty of God was pleased at first to create and make, and in any Degree to communicate his Goodness to, cannot be thought unworthy of his After-care and Providence; yea, by and from its first Creation, it is, in a Manner, entitled to the future Providence of God that created it.

It was the Goodness of God, being self-sufficient, and from eternal Ages perfectly happy in himself, that moved him, in That Point of Duration which his infinite Wisdom saw most fitting, as it were to go forth and down from himself, and to give Being to the things that are, and to communicate his Goodness to each of them in such Degrees as the same his infinite Wisdom was pleased to assign; and from the same Goodness whereby he created things, he still preserves them, provides for them, and takes-care of them.

The

The Works of Creation and Providence are both equally a συγκατάβασις, (as some of the antient Fathers term it,) a Condescension in God; for, without Respect to his Goodness, the Heavenly Affairs are as well beneath his Care and Providence as the Concerns of Men on Earth; but yet such is the Goodness of God, that He certainly takes care of both.

The Inferences and Improvements to be made from the foregoing, are,

First, As from the Benefit of Creation, so from Preservation also, do we infer the Nature and Perfections of God.

As the Benefit of Creation declares unto us the Being and Existence of God, and his adorable Perfections; so here again, what View have we of the Deity! What infinite Wisdom, what boundless Knowledge, what unlimited Power, matchless Goodness, unwearied Attention, Compassion, and Forbearance are necessary to constitute the mighty Preserver of Mankind! — Inspecting the Whole and every Part of the Universe, every Moment; — ordering it according to the Counsels of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, by his omnipotent Will! — unconfused in a Multi-

plicity, exceeding Number; and unwearied thro Eternity! – How magnificent is this Idea of God's Government, filling us with Amazement and Adoration!

Add to this, that a Belief of God's Providence neceſſarily implies a Belief of his Omnipreſence, as well as Omnipotence; For, If he univerſally provides and preſerves, he muſt univerſally know all things, as well as be able to do all things. – How abject a Creature, then, is Man, (how wiſe or great ſoever) when ſeen in this Light, compared to the great and eternal God! Let Pride be abaſed; and let us learn Humility from the Contemplation of God, the Preſerver. — But,

Secondly, Doth God provide for the Neceſſities of Men? Doth he govern and preſide over the univerſal Syſtem; and are his Diſpenſations to the Sons of Men dealt out with an all-wiſe and good Hand?

Then, How comfortable is this Doctrine to us; and how ſhould we receive, with Thankfulneſs, his Favours unto us?

The Belief of a God, at the Head of Nature, guiding its Courſe, ſuperintending the World, and diſpoſing all Events in it with perfect Wiſdom and Goodneſs, raiſes an Idea of the moſt exact univerſal Order, which is the nobleſt and moſt delightful Sub-

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ject of Contemplation; - it sets every thing in a fair and amiable Light; - it diffuses Peace and Serenity thro the Soul, - soothes its disagreeable uneasy Passions, - disposes it to bear its proper Part in the universal Harmony, and to imitate the ruling Wisdom and Benignity which governs the Whole.

It is evident, that Man is not sufficient of himself, to his own Happiness: He is liable to many Evils and Miseries which he can neither prevent nor redress: so that he must necessarily look elsewhere for Happiness; and where, but to God, in his greatest Extremities, can he fly for Succour! To none surely in all the World but to Him "who is a Defence for the oppressed," - "a very present Help in Time of Need."

The Psalmist largely describes the Blessedness of those who are under the Protection of the Almighty. - "He that dwelleth under the Defence of the Most High, shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty, - Who is his Refuge and Fortress; in whom he may trust: - Who will deliver thee from the Snare of the Fowler, & from the noisome Pestilence; - he shall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings shalt thou trust; - his Truth shall be thy Shield and Buckler; - thou shalt not be afraid of any Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by

"Day, nor for the Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs, nor for the Deſtruction that deſtroyeth at Noon-Day: a thouſand ſhall fall beſide thee, and ten thouſand at thy Right-Hand; but it ſhall not come nigh thee: - Only with thine Eyes ſhalt thou behold, & ſee the Reward of the ungodly; - there ſhall no Evil befall thee, neither ſhall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling; - and that, becauſe He hath ſet his Love upon me: therefore will I deliver him: I will ſet him up becauſe he hath known my Name. - He ſhall call upon me and I will hear him; yea, I am with him in Trouble; - I will deliver him, and bring him to Honour: - with long Life will I ſatisfy him, and ſhow him my Salvation." — And the Wiſe-Man, from the like Perſuaſion.

"My Son, keep ſound Wiſdom and Diſcretion, ſo ſhall they be Life unto thy Soul, and Grace to thy Neck: then ſhalt thou walk in thy Way ſafely, and thy Foot ſhall not ſtumble: when thou lieſt down, thou ſhalt not be afraid: yea, thou ſhalt lie down, & thy Sleep ſhall be ſweet: thou ſhalt not be afraid of any ſudden Fear; neither of the Deſolation of the Wicked, when it cometh: for the Lord ſhall be thy Confidence, and ſhall keep thy Foot from being taken;" for, "He hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee."

Can

Can it then be a wiſe and reaſonable Deſign to endeavour to baniſh from the World the Belief of the Being and Exiſtence of God, and his ſuperintending Care and Providence over us?

Not to ſay how impious it is in Reſpect of God, nothing can be more malicious to Men, inaſmuch as nothing can more effectually undermine the only Foundation of our Happineſs. For,

If the Providence of God be taken away, what Security have we againſt thoſe innumerable Dangers to which our Natures are ſo continually expoſed? — What Conſolation under them, when we are reduced to that Extremity that no Creature can give us Relief? But, — If we believe that there is a God who takes care of us, & we be careful to pleaſe him, This cannot but be a mighty Conſolation to us, both under the preſent Senſe of Affliction, and the Apprehenſions of Evil to come. — For, in this Caſe we are ſecure of One of theſe three things, either that God, by his Providence, will prevent the Evils we fear, (if that be beſt for us;) Or, that he will ſupport us under them when they are preſent, and will add to our Strength as he increaſeth our Burthen; — Or that he will make them the Occaſion of a greater Good to us, by turning them either to our Advantage in this World, or to the Increaſe of our Happineſs in the next. But,

The Thought of living in a diſtracted Univerſe, where Confuſion reigns, Good and Evil happen promiſcuouſly, without any intelligent Direction, this muſt have a quite contrary Effect upon the Mind: - It raiſes Horror, Contempt & Diſlike; - it naturally ſours the Temper, rendering it diſpleaſed with itſelf and every thing about it, - diſinclined either to receive or communicate Pleaſure. So fatal is the Tendency of diſbelieving this great Article, the ſupreme conſtant and unerring Government of an infinitely wiſe and good, as well as powerful, divine Providence. — It is everſive not only of Piety, but of Virtue likewiſe: - abating and hindering the proper Effect of the generous and kind Affections; - It deſtroys the very Foundations of all rational Confidence, and indeed, all rational Enjoyment; - It takes away the principal and only effectual Support of Patience & Contentment under Misfortunes, which Experience ſhows that our State in this World is always liable to.

Thus the Caſe ſtands between atheiſtical and religious Opinions, with Regard to the Government of the Univerſe; and they have a direct oppoſite Influence on the Mind.

So that if a Man had Argument ſufficient to perſuade him that there is no God, (as there is all the Reaſon

Reaſon and Proof to the contrary,) yet a Belief in his ſuperintending Providence over us, is ſo neceſſary to the Comfort and Happineſs of our Lives, that we could not enjoy ourſelves; indeed, ſcarcely be ſaid to exiſt without it.

It is, therefore, above all things neceſſary, that we endeavour to eſtabliſh our Hearts in an affectionate Perſuaſion of this moſt important Truth, and apply it on all proper Occaſions, as a powerful Perſuaſive to Virtue, and a never-failing Spring of Conſolation, in all the Viciſſitudes of Life.

Add to this, the great Encouragement it muſt give to our beſt Exertions in all our Affairs, and the Power it hath to remove every diſtruſtful Thought, to have ſuch a Friend at all Times to aſſiſt and provide for us. But,

Thirdly, Doth God provide for the Neceſſities of Man; - doth he uphold us, but ſo, as not againſt our Wills? Then,

In the firſt Place, how thankful ought we to be to him!

The ſmall and ſingle Favours of Men are apt to attract our Attention; and ſhall the great and repeated, & continual Favours of God paſs by unnoticed? Nay, let us with grateful Remembrance "make mention of his holy Name, and tell the People what things he hath done for us;" "Let us joy & rejoice

before him," and with holy David, excite every Faculty of our Soul to give him the Tribute of Praiſe & Thankſgiving due: "Bleſs the Lord O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name: - Bleſs the Lord O my Soul, & forget not all his Benefits; who ſaveth thy Life from Deſtruction, & ſatisfieth thy Mouth with good things, making thee young and luſty as an Eagle."

"The Providence of God is over all his Works, he ruleth and directeth with infinite Wiſdom. He hath inſtituted Laws for the Government of the World; he hath wonderfully varied them in all Beings; and each by his Nature, conformeth to his Will.

"In the Depth of his Mind he revolveth all Knowledge; the Secrets of Futurity are open before him. The Thoughts of our Hearts are naked to his View, he knoweth our Determinations before they are made.

"With Reſpect to his Preſcience there is nothing contingent; - with Reſpect to his Providence, there is nothing Accidental. Wonderful he is in all his Ways; his Counſels are inſcrutable; the Manner of his Knowledge tranſcendeth our Conception.

"Let us, therefore pay to his Wiſdom all Honour and Veneration; and bow down in humble and ſubmiſſive Obedience to his ſupreme Direction."

But

But further, Doth he uphold us, but ſo, as not againſt our Wills? Then, how doth it become us, (in Order to Life,) heartily to comply, aſſiſt, and co-operate with his godly Motions; "ſtriving to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt;" that "we may be perfect, and thoroughly furniſhed unto every good Work," through his all-powerful Aſſiſtance.

Our Dependance on God's Providence muſt be accompanied with a ſincere Obedience to his Commands. Hence the Pſalmiſt joins both together; "Truſt in the Lord, and do good;" and Solomon, after he had ſaid, "Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart," preſently ſubjoins "Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil." Our hope in God is Preſumption, without due Regard to his Laws, and an uniform Obedience to his

God's ſpecial Care and Regard of his Concerns, who hath ſo little or no Regard of his Commands? Can any Man that continues in any wilful Tranſgeſſion of any known Law of God, be a Darling of divine Providence? Will the Angels, the holy Angels of God, thoſe faithful Miniſters of his, attend on, and do good Offices for ſuch as refuſe to ſerve their great Lord and [illegible] violated and perfect Goodneſs did not irreſiſtably govern? But,

Sincerely pious Minds, ſhould ſtrive to preſerve

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What an intolerable Impudence muſt it be in any wicked Man to depend on ſuch a Providence of God over him? With what Face can ſuch a One expect

(under) God's

before him," and with holy David, excite every Faculty of our Soul to give him the Tribute of Praiſe & Thankſgiving due: "Bleſs the Lord O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name: - Bleſs the Lord O my Soul, & forget not all his Benefits; who ſaveth thy Life from Deſtruction, & ſatisfieth thy Mouth with good things, making thee young and luſty as an Eagle."

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But

What I would chiefly, and in an especial Manner inculcate from the Consideration of the Providence of God, is, that seeing "we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves," & our Sufficiency is of God; that the Wisdom of Man, (with respect to the Management and Success of Affairs before him,) is but Foolishness, when compared to the Knowledge and Guidance of the Almighty, and that we are often disappointed where most sanguine, and sometimes Happy where most disappointed: Seeing these things, what I would infer, is, that we should trust God at all Times; seeing that "He careth for us" we should "cast all our Care upon Him."

How usual are bitter Complaints of hard Fortune, ill Usuage, & a bad State of things in the World; as if Order were violated and perfect Goodness did not irresistably govern? But,

Sincerely pious Minds, should strive to preserve

good Affections to the Laws and Government of the Univerſe againſt all Temptations; and even to reconcile themſelves to ſome Hardſhips which ruling Wiſdom ſees fit to impoſe upon them at preſent, believing that they are intended for, and ſhall terminate in, Good. To which Purpoſe nothing can be ſo effectual as a conſtant and careful Attention to the Evidences we have of the divine abſolute Supremacy, infinite Wiſdom, moral Rectitude, and Goodneſs: from whence we may reaſonably infer, that all things are ordered for the greateſt abſolute Good, which the moral Perfections of the Deity determine him to purſue, as his ultimate End; and his infallible Underſtanding directs him to do it in the propereſt Manner. And, Tho' preſent Appearances, to our partial and imperfect View of things, may ſeem to contradict this Principle; yet, we ſhould not, on that Account, ſuffer ourſelves to be removed from the Belief of it. For, the ſatisfying Anſwer to all Objections of this Sort, is, that we are not competent Judges of the Ways of God, becauſe we cannot ſee them perfectly. — The very Argument which faſtened a Conviction on the Mind of Job, and ſilenced all his Complaints, (and it will have the ſame Effect on all who ſeriouſly and deliberately attend to it,) was the Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Divine Perfections

ſections, exerciſed in his Providence. For, from that Topic, Elihu drew his Reaſoning with him, to which he made no Reply; and afterwards God himſelf, when he vouchſafed to ſpeak to him immediately, urged it upon him in a more powerful and effectual Manner, ſo that it produced an humble and thorough Submiſſion. Indeed,

What is there, which, by any Sagacity or Efforts, merely our own, we are able to diſcover, to contrive, or execute? Nor, if we could go thus far, are we able to ſecure that Bleſſing, without which, the Acquiſition itſelf can profit us nothing. (A) But,

"If we are weak, God is ſtrong; yea, his Strength is made perfect in our Weakneſs;" & tho "without him we can do nothing, yet thro' him we can do all things, and be more than Conquerers."

His Wiſdom is infinite, his Power irreſiſtable, and his Goodneſs equal to both. He knows our Wants, & numerous as they are, He can abundantly ſupply them; and ſurely Knowledge ſo wonderful and excellent muſt render Him who is poſſeſſed of it, infinitely more capable of directing us, in all Caſes, than we ourſelves, or the moſt penetrating of our Fellow-Creatures; only let us be careful to pleaſe him by Love, Faith and Obedience.

If

(A) *Abſque Pediculo Pomum non creſcit.*

If God cares for us, then are our Concerns in the beſt and ſafeſt Hands: — This therefore, is That which ſhould ſatisfy our Minds, & remove far from us all diſquieting & uneaſy Thoughts. For, If God undertakes the Care of us, then are we ſure that nothing can happen to us, but by the Diſpoſal, or Permiſſion at leaſt, of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs: — Then are we ſure that That Condition, and thoſe Circumſtances of Life which He chuſes for us, are no other than what we ſhould chuſe for ourſelves, if we were as wiſe as He.

Let us not, then, anxiouſly trouble ourſelves about the Events of things, but reſign ourſelves to the good Pleaſure of Him who diſpoſeth all things according to the Council of his Will; entirely truſting in his Goodneſs, and in his fatherly Care of us, and Affection to us, that he will order all things to the beſt for us; referring the Succeſs of all our Concerns to Him, "in whoſe Hands are all the Ways of the Children of Men;" chearfully ſubmitting to his Determinations, and to the Declarations of his Providence in every Caſe.

This we muſt do, if we would not be perpetually uneaſy to ourſelves; for, who of us can alter the Council of his Will? Or "who, by taking-thought, can add one Cubit to his Stature?"

We

We may perplex ourſelves with a thouſand Deſigns, & "diſquiet ourſelves in Vain;" we may heap up Projects; but, who can tell the End thereof?

Let us then, by theſe Conſiderations be perſuaded to a conſtant Dependence upon God, our Preſerver; and to a conſtant Acquieſcence to his righteous Diſpoſals; and whatever he doth, let us, (with Eli,) ſay, "It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good."

I know but of one ill Uſe that can be made of the Doctrine thus laid down; I ſhall therefore add a few Words to obviate it, and alſo to the properly applying what hath been ſaid. And firſt,

As there is nothing more ingenious than a ſordid Temper, in excuſing what it has no Mind to perform, it may be ſaid, that, if God doth thus provide for the Neceſſities of Man, and is ſo far aſſiſting, that all our Endeavours cannot fruſtrate the Deſigns of his Goodneſs towards us, To what Purpoſe is it, that we are commanded to "labour with our Hands," and to "work out our own Salvation?"

We anſwer, "Much every Way:" A wiſe Governor of moral Agents may judge it right and reaſonable to grant many things to thoſe among them,

who devoutly apply to him, and rightly improve the Favours conferred, which it might be neither right nor reaſonable to confer on ſuch others, as are too indolent to care for them, or even to have him in all their Thoughts. — To truſt in God, then, implies a diligent Uſe of all the Means that are in our Power.

In Vain, therefore, (for Inſtance,) ſhall we, with the pious Pſalmiſt, beſeech God to "open our Eyes, that we may ſee the wonderous things of his Law;" unleſs we can ſay with him too; "All the Day long is my Study in it." — We muſt, therefore, "ſow to ourſelves in Righteouſneſs, if ever we hope to reap in Mercy." — Even the Apoſtles, to whom our Lord's well-known Admonition againſt Thoughtfulneſs was eminently, if not peculiarly addreſſed, had the Wiſdom of the Serpent in Conjunction with the Harmleſneſs of the Dove, recommended to them by the ſame Authority.

The Truth is, we are to caſt all our Care of Event upon God, but not ſo as to become careleſs of the Means, or at all the leſs ſober and vigilant ourſelves.

To neglect our own Part, in any Undertaking, on a Preſumption that God's Providence will accompliſh the Whole for us, were to ſuppoſe him a Patron of Sloth, & by no Means a Rewarder of Induſtry; contrary to what the Scripture aſſures us, and God by many

many Examples, (A) hath teſtified unto us. Whoever, therefore, thus truſts in God, will be ſure to affront him.

Let us, then, "apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom," and "ſeek the things that belong to our Peace," & "the Lord will proſper our Handy-Work." But, Should He, at any Time, for the Trial of our Faith, and the Exerciſe of our Patience, delay for a while, and deny us the Requeſts of our Lips; yet "let us not faint, neither be weary in well-doing," but "tarry the Lord's Leiſure, and He will ſurely bring it to paſs." — Upon the Whole,

We muſt ſo truſt in God, as to uſe our own ſincere Endeavours; and ſo endeavour, as neither to neglect nor forfeit his Favour; and then ſhall either the thing we ſtrive for, or ſomething ſtill better, in due Seaſon, be given unto us.

"Truſt in the Lord, then, with all thine Heart, and

(A) It is obſervable, that God hath often called Men to Places of the higheſt Dignity and Honour, when they have been buſy in the honeſt Employment of their Vocation. Saul was ſeeking his Father's Aſſes, & David keeping his Father's Sheep, when called to the Kingdom. The Shepherds were feeding their Flocks, when they had their glorious Revelation. God called four Apoſtles from their Fiſhery, & Matthew from the Receipt of Cuſtom; Amos from among the Herdſmen of Tekoa, Moſes from keeping Jethro's Sheep, and Gideon from the Threſhing-Floor, &c.

and lean not unto thine own Underſtanding; in all thy Ways acknowledge Him, and He ſhall direct thy Paths." — He will guide us with his Favour and Council here, and after that receive us to Glory.

I ſhall Conclude this, with one of the Collects of our excellent Church.

"O God, whoſe never-failing Providence orde-
"reth all things both in Heaven and on Earth, we
"humbly beſeech Thee to put-away from us all
"hurtful things, and to give us thoſe things which
"be profitable for us, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord,
Amen."

Sermon

SERMON LXXI.

Redemption.

Pſalm ciii. 3. "Who forgiveth all thy Sins, and "healeth all thine Infirmities."

We have already gone-over Two of the great and general Benefits of God to Mankind, his CREATING and PRESERVING them; we come now, therefore,

Thirdly, To the Benefit of REDEMPTION; "Who forgiveth all thy Sins, and healeth all thine Infirmities."

The Doctrine of Redemption is, and ever muſt be to us, in our preſent State, a deep & awful Myſtery; into which we may look with great & exceeding Reverence; but the whole Œconomy of which, we can never fathom.

The World began with Innocence; all was THEIR good, that the good God had made. And,

As he bleſſed the Works of his Hands, ſo their Natures and Harmony magnified him again.

Then

Then "the Morning-Stars ſang together for Joy;" and all his Works rejoiced before him.

Not a Jar in the whole Frame, but all worſhipped their Creator; and praiſed and exalted the Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of their Benefactor. But,

This happy State laſted not long; for Man, the Crown and Glory of the Whole, being tempted to aſpire above his Place, unhappily yielded againſt Command and Duty, as well as Intereſt and Felicity and ſo fell below it; loſt the divine Image, which conſiſted chiefly in the Purity of his Nature, in which he was made; and being now no longer fit for Paradiſe, was expelled the Garden of God, and was driven out from the Preſence of the Lord. Yet,

God that made him, had pity on him: for He, ſeeing that Man was deceived, & that it was not out of Malice, or an original Preſumption in him, but thro the Subtilty of the Serpent who had firſt fallen from his own State, and by the Mediation of the Woman, (A) Man's own Nature and Companion (B), whom the Serpent had firſt deluded; in his infinite Goodneſs found out a Way to repair the Breach, recover the Loſs, and reſtore fallen Man again by a noble and more excellent Adam, promiſed to be born of a Woman;

(A) Nitimur in Vetitum ſemper, cupimusque negata.

(B) Uxori nimium credula ille fuit.

Woman: That as by Means of a Woman, the Evil One had prevailed upon Man; ſo, by a Women alſo, He ſhould come into the World, who would prevail againſt him; "bruiſe his Head, and deliver Man from his evil Power."

There is Room in all the Parts of the Goſpel-Diſpenſation to admire and adore the Wiſdom and the Goodneſs of God, if That will content us, without prying into the ſecret Methods of his Providence.

In the Caſe now before us we want not Matter of this Kind. — When the Tempter allured our firſt Parents to Diſobedience, with the flattering Hopes that they ſhould be as Gods, little did the blind Prophet think that the Day ſhould ever come when the Son of God would appear in the Likeneſs of Man, to take Vengeance of his bold Attempt, to deſtroy his Works, & to redeem the Captives into the glorious Liberty even of the Sons of God: - little did he imagine that Man, who fell by aſpiring to be like God, ſhould ever indeed be ſo like him, as to be ſuperior to all his Arts and Temptations, and be able to drive him from the Dominion he had uſurped over the Creation. And yet, behold the Wiſdom and the Goodneſs of God; by Man came Death, and by Man came the Plenteouſneſs of Redemption. Which, in a ſignal Manner, by the Diſpenſation of

the Son of God in the Fleſh, "in the Fullneſs of Time," was perſonally and fully accompliſhed by Him, & in Him, as Man's Saviour and Redeemer; "by whom we have Redemption, even the Remiſſion of our Sins."

Such is the End of Chriſtianity. — An End which ſurely muſt be contemplated with Joy and Thankſgiving by thoſe who are to reap the Benefits of it.

But, "Are there no Doubts to damp our kindling Joy, and check our riſing Tranſports? — Are we ſure that this is not all a pleaſing Deluſion, called up by Men of Art, to lull us into a deceitful Calm and falſe Security? - Who can aſſure us that this Repreſentation is in reality conformable to the Will of God; that he will indeed, accept the Atonement made for us, and, eſteeming This a Compenſation for our imperfect Obedience, confer upon us theſe great Rewards? - Where is the Evidence for the Truth of Chriſtianity? - If this be as convincing, as the End is deſireable; we will then perform the Conditions preſcribed us with a becoming Fervour and Alacrity."

For our Satisfaction here, we have the Hiſtory of this whole Tranſaction preſerved to us. — In the Holy Scriptures we behold the Plan of our Redemption

tion laid out from the first Revelation of the Design, to its full Completion. We can trace it here with Wonder and Delight from its first Appearance, thro all the Stages of its Progress to its Perfection: and we find in every Period so many Characters of Divinity; - we see it introduced and carried on under a Guard of so many Wonders; and attended by a Series of Prophecies and Miracles, - disposed with such Propriety and Order, and maintaining, thro the widest Interruptions of Time and Place, such an Unity of Design, as fully demonstrate it to be planned by eternal Wisdom; and executed by Omnipotence.

There are many Facts respecting the great Doctrine before us, offered to our Attention, such as cannot fail to inspire us with Gratitude, and teach us Humility; and which, if duly considered, will check every undue Enquiry, and repress the least Tendency to Scepticism and Arrogance.

A careful Observance of these Facts will lead us to much Knowledge, and abundant Truth.

In speaking, therefore, to them, I shall observe the following Method:

First, I shall shew what we are to understand by the Term "Sins."

II. The Expediency and Wisdom of God in the Remission of them. Serm. LXXI. III.

III. The Extent of this Benefit. And then,

IV. Obviate the Objections which have been offered againſt it.

Concluding with ſuch Improvements as ſhall naturally reſult from the ſame. And,

Firſt, The general Definition of Sin is, that it is the Tranſgreſſion of a Law; and every One who is guilty of the Violation of even an HUMAN Inſtitution, may, with Reſpect to That, be called a SINNER. — But, by the Term SIN, we ſeldom underſtand any thing elſe than the Violation of the Ordinances of the ſupreme Legiſlator, God himſelf; the Tranſgreſſion of that LAW, to which all Men are by their very Natures obnoxious; and the Obligation to which, is both perpetual and univerſal. (A) For, "had it not been for the Law, (ſaith the Apoſtle,) I had not known Sin;" for, "where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion," therefore as "whoſoever committeth Sin, tranſgreſſeth the Law;" ſo, on the other hand, whoſoever tranſgreſſeth the Law, committeth Sin.

That there hath always been in Force a Law, containing a Rule of Action for Mankind, is not neceſſary

(A) *Lex Conſcientiam tangit.*

ceſſary to prove: ſuch a One hath been promulged "at ſundry Times, and in diverſe Manners;" the Volumes of it are in our Hands, with their Vouchers, indelibly impreſſed upon every Page of them; and, thoſe who have wanted this, have yet always had a Law written in their Hearts; "their Conſcience bearing Witneſs" to the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of any Action, and "their Thoughts in the mean While accuſing, or elſe excuſing them."

Whatever is oppoſite or contradictory to this Law, whether by the COMMISSION of any thing which is by That prohibited, or by the OMISSION of any Duty which is by that enjoined, ſuch Action or Omiſſion conſtitutes the Perſon ſo offending, a Sinner, and is that particular Kind of Guilt which we are to underſtand by the Term SIN. Now,

As neceſſarily as a Law implies Sin, ſo neceſſarily alſo does Sin imply Puniſhment, (i.e) the Perſon offending againſt this Law becomes neceſſarily obnoxious to the Reſentments of the Legiſlator, and ſubject to ſuch Puniſhment as is annexed to that Guilt, or as He, the ſaid Legiſlator, ſhall think-fit to inflict. — For, without ſuch a Sanction the moſt ſolemn Laws would have very little Force, differing but little from the Admonitions of a Friend: in which Caſe, the Laws would be expoſed to Contempt, and

the Legiſlator himſelf to Affronts and injurious Treatment.

That Sin, or the Violation of the Laws of God, renders the Perſon ſo offending, liable to Puniſhment, will more fully appear from the following Conſiderations. As firſt,

God hath an undoubted Right to make ſuch Laws. We acknowledge the Authority of a Prince to form ſuch Conſtitutions and Orders for the Government of his Subjects, as he thinks proper: we ſubmit to the Right of a Maſter to propoſe his own Laws to his Dependants; and we readily acquieſce in the Regulations preſcribed by a Father to his Children; we agree that each of theſe may juſtly expect Obedience to his particular Injunctions, provided at leaſt that they do not claſh with the prior Inſtitutions of any ſuperior Power. (A) Now,

What the Prince is to the People, What the Maſter to his Family, and the Parent to his Child, That is God to the whole Race of Mankind; the King, the Maſter, and the Father of us all. From him we derive

(A) A deſpotic Prince, or other Legiſlative Corporation, whether ſole, or aggregate, may equitably impoſe on the Subject any Rule, the Obſervance of which may conſiſt with the Obſervance of the Laws of God. A Maſter, or a Father has the ſame Privelege with Reſpect to his Family, provided he do not infringe upon thoſe Laws, nor the Civil Conſtitutions, to which he himſelf is ſubject.

derive not only the Contingencies of Being, but Being itſelf: - From him, as from one common Parent, are we all deſcended; and thoſe, whom we call our Parents here, are no other than the Channels thro which the Principles of Life are conveyed to us from him: - his Dependants are we for every thing by which this Life is ſupported; "as the Eyes of a Servant look up to the Hand of his Maſter," for his Subſiſtance, "even ſo do our Eyes wait upon the Lord our God; gathering then only when he giveth, and when he openeth his Hand being filled with Good." And,

For the Right of Sovereignty, it is plain that none can be more abſolute than that which is implied by Creation. — "The Potter hath Power over his Clay."

God, then, as King, as a Maſter, and Father, has a Right to command; & we, as Subjects, Servants, and Children, are indiſpenſibly bound to obey. — And, the extreme Purity, and impartial Juſtice of this Legiſlator, forbid us to ſuppoſe that his Laws can be violated with Impunity; for, there do not ſubſiſt any two things, between which there is ſo great a Contrariety, as between God and Sin.

Every Sin, therefore, being a Contradiction to his

Will, as well as an Affront to his Authority, cannot but awake his Reſentment; and Juſtice requiring that ſome Diſtinction ſhould be made between the Obedient and the Rebellious, while the former naturally pleaſes himſelf with the Expectation of a Reward, the latter muſt as naturally tremble with the Apprehenſions of Puniſhment. But it hath pleaſed God to ſtrengthen and confirm this natural Impreſs by the moſt poſitive Declarations; and whilſt the higheſt Honours are ſet before, and promiſed to the faithful and obedient; the ſevereſt Vengeance is denounced againſt the hardy and impenitent. Whoever, therefore, SINNETH, or infringeth upon this Law, becomes neceſſarily from that Inſtant liable to ſuch Puniſhment as the Legiſlator may in Juſtice inflict: he thenceforward ſtands in the Relation of a Debtor to God, and muſt pay the Forfeiture whenever he ſhall think proper to demand it. Now,

It appears, that this is the real Caſe of all Mankind — "All have ſinned, and come-ſhort of the Glory of God:" - Our firſt Parent was diſobedient to the firſt Command which was laid upon him, and by it brought a Stain upon all his Poſterity forever.

The Denunciation againſt him was, - "In the Day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die." (*) The whole Race of Mankind was, at that Time, ſo involved

(*) Adam was not (as ſome have, without any Ground from Scripture, imagined) created *actually Immortal*; but he was created with a *Poſſibility* of eſcaping Death, and of *becoming Immortal*.

The Means by which Fleſh and Blood was to have been preſerved from Mortality, to which it could not, by Nature, but be ſubject, was the Uſe of the *Tree of Life*.

This appears from Geneſis, — *And now, leſt the Man put-forth his Hand, and take alſo of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever.* This ſhews plainly and undeniably, that Man was not created *naturally Immortal*; but that, by the Uſe of the *Tree of Life*, (whatever is implied under *That* Expreſſion) he was to have been preſerved from Dying.

volved in him, that it was impoſſible, but that all muſt partake of the Corruption, and conſequently all muſt be included in the Curſe.

The Nature of my Subject obliges me to enlarge on this unpleaſing Topic, tho' Guilt and Miſery be the Conſequence of it.

"Death," then, (ſays the Apoſtle, "reigned from Adam to Moſes, even over thoſe who had not ſinned after the Similitude of Adam's Tranſgreſſion," (i.e) over all the Poſterity of Adam, excluſive of none. (A)

2ly, The frequent Emotions which attend the very Dawn of Life: - Our early Thirſt to tranſgreſs, beſpeaks a Corruption inherent in our Nature, and inter-woven in our very Conſtitution. A Propenſity to Vice is co-œvel with us; and even then, when we were too-young to feel the Influence of either Precept or Example, began that fatal "Law in our Members

(A) Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, &c. - were ſuch as confeſſedly "ſinned not after the Similitude of Adam's Tranſgreſſion," but "walked with God," and received His Teſtimony to their Righteouſneſs: Yet, even theſe were not exempt from that Yoke which is "the Wages of Sin," to which it is certain they could not have been ſubject, had not "Sin laid at their Door." From the Guilt of actual Diſobedience they ſtand, *in general*, acquitted; ſo that we are under a Neceſſity of placing the Whole to the Score of that, which they, with the Reſt of Mankind, had derived from their common Progenitor.

Will, as well as an Affront to his Authority, cannot but awake his Reſentment; and Juſtice requiring that ſome Diſtinction ſhould be made between the Obedient and the Rebellious, while the former naturally pleaſes himſelf with the Expectation of a Reward, the latter muſt as naturally tremble with the Apprehenſions of Puniſhment. But it hath pleaſed God to ſtrengthen and confirm this natural Impreſs by the moſt poſitive Declarations; and whilſt the higheſt Honours are ſet before, and promiſed to the faithful and obedient; the ſevereſt Vengeance is denounced againſt the hardy and impenitent. Whoever, therefore, SINNETH, or infringeth upon this Law, becomes neceſſarily from that Inſtant liable to ſuch Puniſhment as the Legiſlator may in Juſtice inflict: he thenceforward ſtands in the Relation of a Debtor to God, and muſt pay the Forfeiture whenever he ſhall think proper to demand it. Now,

It appears, that this is the real Caſe of all Mankind — "All have ſinned, and come ſhort of the [illegible]

By Sin, our firſt Parent forfeited his Privilege; being from thenceforth juſtly excluded out of the Paradiſe of God, and put out of the Reach of the *Tree of Life*: (i.e.) he was, by the righteous Sentence of God, left ſubject to *that Mortality*, which, in the Courſe of Nature, muſt neceſſarily and unavoidably come upon him and his Poſterity, when they were no longer ſuffered to have Recourſe to This miraculous Means of being preſerved from Death.

volved in him, that it was impoſſible, but that all muſt partake of the Corruption, and conſequently all muſt be included in the Curſe.

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See the IX. Article of Religion. Serm. LXXI.

Members" to commence Hoſtilities "againſt the Law of our Minds." — And! What are we to call This but the Remains of that unhappy Blemiſh contracted by our firſt Parents, & by them perpetuated to their Poſterity!

3dly The Deſcendants of Adam, had they not been affected by his Guilt, had not been ſo ſtrongly affected by that Part of the Puniſhment of it, which was to take immediate Place.

ADAM was juſtly devoted to DEATH; Abel and Seth might have been immortal for any Offence of their own: the Ground was curſed for Adam's Diſobedience; but will God afflict his innocent Offspring with the ſame Curſe? No ſurely: - could there have been yet but ſuch a thing as Innocence, all might have been well, and the righteous Man might even yet have expected a plentiful and ſpontaneous Harveſt.

Thus from the Effect we trace the Cauſe, and read all Mankind's Guilt in their Puniſhment; for "ſhall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?" & Right it is, that they who drank ſo largely of the poiſoned Draught, who received Corruption for their Inheritance, ſhould be Heirs alſo of the Miſeries which flowed from it.

It is in this View, [viz.] with Reſpect to the general Influence he had over Mankind, that the firſt Man is repreſented as a proper and ſignificant Type of the Meſſiah - All were affected by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and conſequently all had been affected by the Unrighteouſneſs of Adam; otherwiſe there lies no Kind of Similitude between the former and latter ADAM.

"Thus, by ONE Man's Diſobedience the whole World were made Sinners."

That "the whole World, both Jews and Gentiles, are under Sin" - that "there is none righteous, no not one," - that "all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God," &c, are the general Aſſertions of Scripture: - not the moſt upright that ever breathed are exempted, nor even the Infant, whoſe narrow Term of Life gave him no Opportunity for the Commiſſion of ACTUAL Sins: - And, if ſuch be Sinners, it muſt be on the Account of that ORIGINAL Pollution inherent in their Natures — It is further added, that we are by our very Natures, "the Children of Wrath," (i.e) born under Condemnation; which Condemnation is undoubtedly founded on Sin, but could not poſſibly paſs on all Men for any Offence of their own, before they were capable of committing any: and muſt, therefore neceſſarily

reſult from the Offence of that ONE, in whom ALL were then included.

Nor was this, by any Means, a novel Doctrine of the Apoſtle; for it had long before been Matter of Affliction to the royal Pſalmiſt, [viz] that he "was ſhapen in Iniquity, and that in Sin did his Mother conceive him:" and the Man, to whoſe perſonal Righteouſneſs God himſelf had given his own ſacred Teſtimony, had, to an Acknowlegement of his own Guilt in this Reſpect, ſubjoined this poſitive and univerſal Aſſertion, that "there is no Man free from Pollution, even tho' his Life be but a Day long."

"How can theſe things be?" is a Queſtion that hath been too often urged, and is only to be anſwered by another - Nay rather, how can they be otherwiſe? - How ſtrongly are our Forms, our Features, our Diſtempers, our very Particularities communicated to our Children! - What Wonder, then, that a Corruption which ſunk ſo deep into the Nature of out firſt Parent, ſhould together with the Principles of that Nature, be, in a continual Succeſſion, conveyed to all his Poſterity? But,

Allowing this Corruption to be comunicable, how can it, with reſpect to us, have a true & formal Nature of Sin, ſeeing that it is altogether INVOLUNTARY? Involuntary,

Involuntary, indeed, it is in ſome Reſpects, as it doth not directly proceed from the free Motion of the Will; but as it is in itſelf the natural Biaſs and Inclination of the Will to Evil, we cannot ſay that it is altogether beſides us.

It may then be urged, why did God create us on ſuch Terms? - The very Suppoſition that He did create us, anſwers the Queſtion; — "Shall the thing formed, ſay to Him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me THUS?" — But, in ſhort,

All theſe, and a thouſand more Objections, ten-thouſand Times more ſpecious, can only reduce the Doctrine of ORIGINAL SIN into the Claſs of the Chriſtian ARCANA. For, If Words have any Force of Meaning; - if the ſacred Writings be of any Authority, then is it nevertheleſs ſtrictly true, however incomprehenſible to us; for thoſe Writings do evidently aſſert it with as much Strength and Plainneſs as Words are capable of expreſſing it. But,

This is by no Means all that is intended by the Article before us; for under the Term SIN is comprehended that Kind of Guilt alſo, which is diſtinguiſhed from the former, by the Name of ACTUAL SIN; that Grape which every Man eateth of himſelf; [viz.] thoſe Tranſgreſſions of the Law, which a Man is guilty of knowingly and willingly, of which

we are taught that Remiſſion may be had thro' the Atonement of Chriſt, upon Faith and Repentance.

For as much then, as we are all Sinners from the very Moment of our Birth, and have added to it by actual Tranſgreſſions; – and for as much as Sin implies an Obnoxiouſneſs to Puniſhment, it appears that we are BORN Objects of God's Wrath, Debtors to his Juſtice, & liable to receive thoſe bitter Wages which have by him been declared to be the Reward of Sin. But,

It hath pleaſed that great Being, ("whoſe Property is always to have Mercy, and to whom only it appertaineth to forgive Sins,") "it hath pleaſed him verily," and his Debtors we are, to releaſe us from all fatal Obligations. (A)

The Means by which it was effected, and the Expediency, and Wiſdom of God in it, will be the Subject of our next.

(A) See the 2d. and 31ſt. Articles of Religion.

Sermon

SERMON LXXII.

On the same Subject.

Psalm ciii. 3. "Who forgiveth all thy Sins, and "healeth all thine Infirmities."

Having already shown what we are to understand by the Term "SINS." and, that we are all Sinners from the Moment of our Birth; &, that to our ORIGINAL Sins we have added ACTUAL Transgressions, & consequently were Objects of God's Wrath, Debtors to his Justice, and liable to receive those bitter Wages which have by him been declared to be the Reward of Sin. I am now to show (in Order,) that it hath pleased that great Being, ("whose Property is always to have Mercy, and to whom only it appertaineth to forgive Sins,") "it hath pleased him verily," and his Debtors we are, to release us from all fatal Obligations.

The Means by which it was effected, and the Expediency, and Wisdom of God in it, we are now particularly to show.

Man

Man (as we have ſeen,) had never a natural Right to Happineſs: his Title to it, at firſt, was not abſolute and inherent, but conditional. The Conditions were, that he ſhould always preſerve himſelf an Obedient and ſinleſs Creature. (A) In this he failed; and therefore, his Title to Happineſs was as much extinct as if it had never been; ſince no conditional Right can ſubſiſt longer than the Conditions are maintained. But, what was ſtill worſe, his Situation was ſuch, that he was never to return into an intire Inſenſibility & Indifference, ſo as to remain ſuſpended

(A) Man's Innocence was the Condition on which he held his original Title to Happineſs. Having loſt his Innocence, he had therefore no longer any Means of obtaining Happineſs. For, if we ſay that he could, by any natural Abilities of his own, raiſe himſelf again to forfeited Happineſs; what is this, but deſtroying all eſſential Difference between Virtue and Vice? Taking the Scales of Juſtice from the Hand of God, and making Man himſelf Arbiter of the Terms on which he will be ſaved? It is placing Man beyond all Poſſibility of forfeiting his Title to Happineſs; for, he could never forfeit his Right to that, which he had in himſelf a natural Power of obtaining.

The firſt Sinner, therefore, could have no reaſonable Expectations of Happineſs, except it ſhould pleaſe the Mercy of God to open for him a new Way to it. — This God hath vouchſafed to do out of his great Compaſſion for the helpleſs State of fallen Man. He provided an Expiation for thoſe Sins, which Man himſelf was unable to expiate, the Sacrifice of his own beloved Son; and changed the Conditions of obtaining Happineſs, on our Part, from perfect Innocence, which we were now no longer capable of, to Repentance, and Faith in the Merits and Satisfaction of our Redeemer.

ded, as it were, in a middle State, between Happiness & Misery. At the same Time, therefore, that he fell under the Forfeiture of Happiness, he incurred the Penalty of Misery. From this dreadful Situation he could never recover himself by his own Power. - From an innocent Creature he could make himself a guilty one; but when became guilty, he could not make himself innocent. - He could easily stain the Purity of his Nature, but could not wash-out that Stain. - his Guilt, indeed, might be forgiven; it could not be taken-away.

But then, Forgiveness was not the Part of the Offender; it could proceed from none, but from the offended. - Here it pleased the eternal Son of God to relieve us, and to take upon himself the Office of a Mediator betwen God & Man. — To restore the human Race, - to reinstate them in their Original, nay, in greater Happiness — to atone for their Offences, and renew their Natures, He hath made a Covanant of Grace, and taken upon himself the Office of a Redeemer. Indeed,

He offered himself a Sacrifice to satisfy the Demands of Justice against us, and thus restored us, tho' not to Innocence, yet to the Privileges of it; freeing us from the Punishment of Guilt, and putting us again in the Possession of a Right to Happiness

pineſs under the Conditions of Repentance for paſt Sins; Faith in his prevailing Merits, and Obedience for the future.

That this was neceſſary and expedient for Us, as well as for the Honour of God, we are now to ſhew. Indeed,

The Reaſons of this Appointment "we ſee, as thro a Glaſs darkly:" yet enough of them to convince us, of its being "the Wiſdom of God," tho' "in a Myſtery."

We do not preſume to aſſert, that this was ſo ABSOLUTELY and INDISPENSIBLY Neceſſary, that the Salvation of Man could NO OTHERWISE be ſecured: We dare not aſſert This. For,

Who art thou, O Man, that ſhalt have Courage to preſcribe Bounds to Omnipotence; or how canſt thou ſearch into his deep & manifold Wiſdom, who, by innumerable Ways, can provide for the Good of his Creatures? But, though we would by all Means repreſs their Preſumption who would argue for the Neceſſity of God's Doings FROM the Wiſdom and evident Expediency of them; yet we are forward to ſhew, that the Manner in which it hath pleaſed God to redeem the human Race, is honourable to himſelf, and bleſſed to us. (*)

This we deduce from the Facts before us. The wiſe

(*) Whether God could have found out any other Means of reſtoring loſt Man, beſides this of making himſelf the Son of Man, is not only an unneceſſary, but a preſumptuous Enquiry; tho' ſome have ventured to go thus far, from the natural inherent Juſtice of God, and his perfect and immutable Hatred to Sin, and his inflexible Regard to the Honour of his Law, which was violated, & the Vindication of his Truth by which he ſtood obliged to puniſh the Violation of it with the Death which he had threatned; to conclude that without ſo full a Satisfaction as that of the precious Blood of his only & entirely belo-

wiſe Lord of all the Earth doth nothing in Vain. (A) We

(A) When we conſider the great and wonderful Work of our Redemption, tho we cannot account for every Step of it to our own Reaſon and Underſtanding, yet neither can we imagine it to be the Effect of mere Will and arbitrary Appointment, and void of all Foundation in the Reaſon and Propriety of things. — All the Works of God are Works of Wiſdom; &, as far as our Capacities give us Leave to judge, we diſcern evident Marks of Wiſdom in them all; and diſcover a Fitneſs and Propriety in every thing with Reſpect to the End which it is intended to ſerve & promote. If this be ſo in every Inſtance in which we are able to make any Judgment, it is a great Preſumption that it is, and muſt be, ſo in all other Inſtances, which are too high and great to be viewed and meaſured by human Underſtanding: And we have one poſitive Argument that it is ſo, ariſing from the natural Notion we have of God, and of his Attributes of Wiſdom and Juſtice.

It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe ſuch a Being to do any thing by *Chance*, or in Complyance to mere Will and Humour; No: Every Act of God, is the Act of an infinite Wiſdom, and is founded in the neceſſary Reaſon and Propriety of things; & it is as true of the Works of Grace, as it is of the Works of Nature, that "in Wiſdom He has ordained them all."

It is one thing not to be able to diſcern the Reaſons of Providence, and another to ſuppoſe there is no Reaſon in them. — The Reaſons, that made it either neceſſary or proper for Chriſt to die for the Sins of Mankind, may be removed out of our Sight: but to ſuppoſe that Chriſt really did die for the Sins of the World; and yet that there was no Reaſon or Propriety in his ſo doing, is to found Revealed Religion upon a Principle deſtructive of Natural Religion: For no Religion can ſubſiſt, with an Opinion that God is a Being capable of acting without Reaſon.

Tho', therefore, it becomes us rather implicitly to adore the divine Wiſdom, than curiouſly to enquire into the Reaſons, and boldly to ſound the Depths of it; yet is there ſome Light afforded us in Scrip-

pineſs under the Conditions of Repentance for paſt Sins; Faith in his prevailing Merits, and Obedience for the future.

That this was neceſſary and expedient for Us, as well as for the Honour of God, we are now to ſhew. Indeed,

The Reaſons of this Appointment "we ſee, as thro a Glaſs darkly:" yet enough of them to convince us, of its being "the Wiſdom of God," tho' "in a Myſtery."

We do not preſume to aſſert, that this was ſo ABSOLUTELY and INDISPENSIBLY Neceſſary, that the Salvation of Man could NO OTHERWISE be ſecured: We dare not aſſert This. For,

Who art thou, O Man, that ſhalt have Courage to preſcribe Bounds to Omnipotence; or how canſt thou ſearch into his deep & manifold Wiſdom, who, by innumerable Ways, can provide for the Good of his Creatures? But, though we would by all Means repreſs their Preſumption who would argue for the Neceſſity of God's Doings FROM the Wiſdom and evident Expediency of them; yet we are forward to

ved Son, he could not have releaſed us from the Curſe to which we all were juſtly ſubject by our Diſobedience. — But ſuppoſing thus really ſo "ſhorten his Arm," or to limit his Wiſdom, we may yet boldly affirm, that ſince he has been pleaſed to make uſe of this Way, it is for that very Reaſon to be believed the moſt fitting of all others, and moſt wiſe; and that in Reſpect of his own Glory, and the Good of Mankind.

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We may, therefore, conclude from the whole Hiſtory of Redemption, brought-down from the firſt

ture, whereby we may diſcover a mighty Fitneſs & Congruity between the Method that was uſed in our Redemption, and the End that was brought-about by it.

Guiding ourſelves, therefore, by the Diſcoveries made to us on this Head in holy Writ, we may ſafely venture to ſay, — It was fit and requiſite, that our Redeemer ſhould be *GOD*, that, by the infinite Dignity of his Perſon, the Value of the Sacrifice which he made of himſelf in the Fleſh, might be more enhanced, as to become a ſufficient Atonement for the Sins of the whole World: — That the Laws which he ſhould publiſh, might carry in them the utmoſt Obligation & Force: — That his Doctrine might have the higheſt Authority: — That we, being aſſured of his abſolute Security from Sin, might look-up to him for Example, as to a perfect Pattern of Holineſs, and in all things, without Doubt or Fear, implicitly follow his Steps. — It was fit He ſhould be *GOD*, that he might give an Inſtance of infinite Condeſcenſion and Love towards us, and might from thence engage us to love & obey him alſo, without Bounds. — That he might be enabled in our Behalf to vanquiſh Satan, and all the Powers of Hell, and erect a ſpiritual Kingdom in the Hearts of Men, by triumphing firſt over all the Strength, and Cunning, and Malice of our ſpiritual Enemies.

It was highly expedient alſo, that He ſhould be *MAN*, that our Offences might be repaired in that Nature in which they were committed: And, "as by One Man's Diſobedience, many were made Sinners; ſo, by the Obedience of One Man, many might be made righteous:" — That he might be qualified from thence to be "a merciful, as well as faithful High-Prieſt in things pertaining to God," and a proper Interceſſor with Him for Man, whoſe Infirmities he had tried, and whoſe Needs he had been ſenſible of; that having "himſelf ſuffered and been tempted, he might be able and willing to ſuccour them that are tempted." And,

Laſtly,

firſt Promiſe in Paradiſe, through all ſucceeding Ages, to its full Completion in our Saviour's Death and Reſurrection, that it was HIGHLY, though NOT indiſpenſibly neceſſary for Mankind, as well as for the Honour of the Deity, to redeem the human Race in THIS Manner.

God created Man upright, and gave him a Law by which he ſhould ſtand.

It was, therefore, from the Beginning, infinitely reaſonable, that all poſſible Honour & Obedience ſhould have been paid to it: But,

To our Confuſion, this Honour due to the Laws of God was by the Sins and Impieties of Men diminiſhed, as far as poſſible.

It was, therefore, neceſſary and reaſonable, after ſuch preſumptuous Tranſgreſſion, that God ſhould ſome Way or other vindicate his divine Authority; and becauſe the Puniſhment naturally due, and actually

Laſtly, That by appearing in human Form, he might make a Difference between the rigorous & aſtoniſhing Diſpenſation of the Law, & that milder One of Grace: coming to us in the moſt familiar & winning Way, inſtructing us in our Duty like One of us; and propoſing to us a lively and full Example of what he taught, and in what he did, and ſuffered for us.

Theſe are ſome of the Accounts which God has ſignified to us in the Scriptures, why his infinite Wiſdom was pleaſed to proceed in *this* Way, rather than any other, in reconciling Man to Himſelf.

tually threatened to Sin, was Death; therefore, unleſs ſome Means could be found-out whereby to prevent it, the inflicting this Puniſhment muſt have been our utter Deſtruction. (A) Man, having by his voluntary Tranſgreſſion, and wilful Diſobedience, fallen from his Uprightneſs, was unable to recover, and raiſe himſelf out of his own Ruin; no Creature was able to do it. (B) God

(A) The Nature of Man's Offence, and the Character of the Perſon whom he offended, would not admit of a trifling Satisfaction; and to have made ſuch as bore any Proportion to his Offence, (which could have been no other than what was firſt denounced againſt it,) had not been a Remiſſion, but a Diſcharge of the Debt.

(B) It doth not appear but that God might have exacted the whole Penalty very conſiſtently with his Mercy: but it is not ſo evident, that he could have granted ſuch Remiſſion or Releaſe, conſiſtently with his Juſtice, without ſome proportionable Satisfaction: No ſuch could be made by Man; for, as he owed to God an univerſal Obedience, No After-Acts of Duty could atone for his Tranſgreſſion, becauſe to all thoſe Acts he was obliged, tho he had never tranſgreſſed; and if he had done every thing which was enjoined him, he had even then been but an "unprofitable Servant," having only done that which was but his Duty to do.

All the virtuous Actions which we can hereafter do, will no more expiate our former Tranſgreſſions, than the not contracting new Debts can be accounted Payment of the Old. — Beſides, we never obey ſo well, as not to add continually ſome Degree of freſh Miſbehaviour.

From hence ariſes a ſolid and concluſive Proof of the ſuperior Nature of Chriſt: for, had he been no more than Man, then he himſelf had been included in the Curſe; and conſequently, ſo far from being qualified to "make Atonement for the Sins of the whole World," muſt

God, indeed, is merciful; but he is equally righteous and holy, and abhorrent of Sin. And, what can the mere Light of our own Underſtandings diſcover to us, with any Aſſurance, from thoſe Attributes joined? — We ſee, that in this World the moſt merciful Rulers, if they are juſt & wiſe alſo, (which God is,) often puniſh even thoſe Offenders, who repent the moſt ſincerely. The Honour and good Order of their Government requires it. And why may not God have Reaſons of the ſame, or even of a different Nature, for doing the ſame thing?

But ſtill, the Caſe of Penitents muſt be more favourable than that of others. And there is Ground for all ſuch to hope, that ſuch Pity, as can, will be ſhewn them in ſome Manner, tho' they cannot be ſure how, or to what Effect. And God hath been pleaſed to confirm this Hope, from Time to Time, by various Revelations, gradually unfolding his gracious Deſigns: till, by the Coming of our Bleſſed Lord, the whole Purpoſe of his Goodneſs was open'd, as far as it is proper, that Mortals ſhould be acquainted with it.

From

muſt have wanted a Mediator for himſelf; whereas his Sacrifice being declared to be *ſatisfactory* for that Purpoſe, and a *ſufficient* Expiation of the general Guilt, it is evident that He was a Being of a Nature, not only *different* from, but alſo greatly *ſuperior* to that of Man, for whom this Satisfaction was to be made. Serm. LXXII.

From theſe Revelations, contained in the Bible, we learn, that Repentance alone, even the completeſt, would not be ſufficient to reinſtate us fully in God's Favour; much leſs the poor Endeavours towards it which We, of Ourſelves, are capable of uſing: but that our Pardon and Salvation depend on the compaſſionate Sufferings and Interceſſion of a Mediator appointed by our Heavenly Father; who intending to reconcile the World to himſelf, and to encourage Sinners to repent & turn to him, thought fit to offer the Pardon of Sin, together with the other Bleſſings of his Goſpel, in ſuch a Way as ſhould demonſtrate BOTH the Guilt of Sin, and his Hatred of it; and yet, with That, his Love of Sinners, and his Compaſſions towards them. — A free Pardon, without a Sacrifice, had not been ſo agreeable neither to the Majeſty of the great Governor of the World, nor the Authority of his Laws, nor ſo proper a Method to oblidge Men to that Strictneſs and Holineſs of Life that he deſigned to bring them to: and, therefore, he thought-fit to offer this Pardon and thoſe other Bleſſings thro a Mediator, who was to deliver to the World this new and holy Rule of Life, and to confirm it by his own unblemiſhed Example.

Had He without any Satisfaction to his offended Juſtice have pardoned the Sinner, remitted his Puniſhment

niſhment, and received him to Favour, this would, in no Way, have been agreeable to his Holineſs Juſtice, and Truth; nor would it have become the wiſe Governor of the World, who loves Righteouſneſs and Order, and who hates Sin, & is oblidged, (by the eſſential Rectitude of his Nature,) to diſcountenance and diſcourage it.

Our Saviour, therefore, (the Son of God,) by obeying and ſuffering to Death, on our Behalf, and in our ſtead, hath, in the moſt glorious Manner, relieved our Neceſſities, and vindicated God's Honour and Authority.

It was neceſſary for Man, as a Sinner, indiſpenſibly neceſſary for him, that he ſhould, ſome Way or other be reconciled to God, - the Guilt of his former Sins pardoned, - the Dominion of his preſent Corruption and Concupiſcence ſubdued, - his Services made acceptable, and himſelf aſſured of future Grace and Felicity; indeed, in Order to qualify him for the Enjoyment of God, and the Participation of future Bleſſedneſs, it was indiſpenſibly neceſſary for him to have his Nature renewed, as well as his Sins forgiven.

For God, it was neceſſary and highly agreeable to his Honour not to paſs by Sin, preſumptuous Sin, unpuniſhed and unrevenged; not to admit into his

Favour and Kingdom Sinners, unconvinced and unconverted, unrenewed in Mind, in Affections, and Behaviour. Now,

The Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ, (whose DIVINE Nature, united to the HUMAN, gave his Sacrifice an unspeakable Value, *) effecting all these great & glorious Ends, thus appears highly expedient, truly wise, & worthy of God; - for thro' the Merit of that Redemption, Man's past Offences are pardoned, and he is reconciled to God the Father,

(*) That which rendered the Sacrifice of our Redeemer infinitely meritorious, was, his being God as well as Man. - His Blood was so highly propitiatory not barely because it was the Blood of a "Man without Spot or Blemish," (as all Sacrifices were required to be,) but because it was the Blood of a Man, to whom the Divinity was most intimately united in one and the same Person. The Want of Innocence in all Men besides, made it impossible for any Man to redeem his Soul, by laying down his Life; for, by Reason of his accumulated Guilt, such an Offering would be impure, & stand in Need of another Expiation; much less could any sinful Man, (who could not satisfy for himself,) be able to satisfy for the Sins of others.

Nor yet could any Angel have satisfied for the Sins of Mankind, tho' we should suppose that possibly he might have taken our Nature upon him; for Angels being our Fellow-Servants, could not be solvent for more than their own Debts of Adoration and Thanksgiving; and being at best, but created Spirits, (and therefore finite, tho' of a nobler Degree,) they might, indeed, desire to look into the Incarnation and Cross of our Mediator, and minister unto those, who should be Heirs of Salvation bought by his Blood; but could no more satisfy the Wrath of an omnipotent Majesty than Man himself, who is a finite Creature. God alone could do this: And! of infinite Mercy did it.

ther, though the Blood of the everlaſting Son. He is not only reconciled, but admitted into a new Covenant, made an Heir of new Hopes, made Partaker of a new Life by the Spirit, and by the ſame is enabled to ſhew forth all the Virtue and Power of it: And, this Grace, inexpreſſibly valuable, and wholly free to him, is yet not granted ſo eaſily by God, as to diſregard the Laws of Juſtice, or to paſs by Sin, without ſevere Animadverſions; but it is the Purchaſe of a Perſon, high in Dignity, & great in Honour, even God's only-begotten Son; even his becoming Man for our Sakes, ſuffering thro Life, and in the End dying to redeem us, For,

As an Offence is enhanced according to the Greatneſs of the Perſon againſt whom it is committed: ſo the Eſtimation of the Puniſhment, born by Way of Satisfaction, is to be proportionably advanced, according to the Quality of the Perſon that ſubmits to it. And, as God, againſt whom we offended, is of infinite Power, tranſcendent Righteouſneſs, tremendous Majeſty, and incomprehenſible Wiſdom; ſo Chriſt, who, "by the ſhedding of his Blood, obtained eternal Redemption for us," has the ſame Power, Majeſty, Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom; and conſequently, from the Divinity of his Perſon, ariſes the meritorious Fullneſs, and invaluable Worth of

his Satisfaction: "if the Death of his Saints be pretious in the Sight of God," how infinitely more pretious muſt the Death of his beloved Son be, who "was in the Form of God," "equal to the Father," "God bleſſed forever!"

Thus the Honour of God's Mercy in forgiving, and the Honour of his Juſtice in puniſhing, are hereby ſecured, and for ever made glorious: (A) This is that wonderful Compoſition of Juſtice and Mercy which Men and Angels for ever adore, but can never ſufficiently praiſe and celebrate: Here, "Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other."

When we conſider the wretched State we were in, before Chriſt undertook our Ranſom, the Neceſſity of ſinning, the Certainty of our Puniſhment, and how little Reaſon there was for God to accept of a Satisfaction to reconcile ſuch Rebels to him, we cannot but eſteem it an high Inſtance of God's Goodneſs

(A) The Law and the Goſpel, like Bond and Acquittance, both mention the Debt, but to different Purpoſes; the One, to oblidge Payment; the Other to free from it.

With Reſpect to God, It was a ſtrong Demonſtration of his Concern for the Glory of his Attributes, and the Honour of his Government, that He would not be reconciled to Sinners on any other Terms than ſuch an Interpoſition in our Behalf: which yet, ſince He himſelf provided, as well as accepted, his Kindneſs to us is no leſs, than if he had pardoned us without it.

neſs that he was pleaſed to provide a Remedy himſelf, and to point out a Method by which Mercy might take place, and yet Juſtice be fully ſatisfied: Such a Method, as nothing but his own Wiſdom could contrive; ſuch a Method, as the Angels were not able to deviſe, much leſs could Man have diſcovered it for himſelf by all the Art that his own Miſery could ſuggeſt.

As there was nothing in our Power that could influence God, or move him to ſhew Mercy to us; and as there was no Satisfaction but the Blood of our Redeemer that could, conſiſtently with God's Juſtice, be accepted by him, our Condition was quite deſperate and hopeleſs. No one could have expected that God himſelf ſhould ſubmit to pay the Ranſom for us, or, indeed, that it was poſſible to unite the Divine Nature in ſuch a Manner to our ſinful Fleſh, that as Man had ſinned, ſo Man ſhould ſuffer; and yet that his Sufferings by Virtue of that Union ſhould be "a full, perfect, and ſufficient Sacrifice," which it was impoſſible for mere Man to make: - But thus it was ordered: - Thus God was ſatisfied: - and thus Man was redeemed from Miſery: - Thus was he reſcued from everlaſting Puniſhment, and entitled to everlaſting Glory! — "O! The Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God!"

Thus, by the Blood of Chriſt, which was ſhed upon the Croſs, are we cleanſed from that Pollution, which infected our Natures and flowed to us by Inheritance from our firſt Progenitor: & whereas we had otherwiſe been perpetually obnoxious to the Wrath of God on That Score only, and juſtly liable to the Puniſhment which was due to That Guilt, we are now reſtored, ſo far at leaſt, that upon certain Terms, (and thoſe by no Means ſevere,) the Puniſhment ſhall not only be remitted, but even the Guilt itſelf ſhall never once riſe-up in Judgement againſt us, or be placed to our Account. But,

III. I am to ſhow the Extent of this.

God's Benefits are not confined; and "He is no Reſpecter of Perſons." As he created ALL Men, and ſtill preſerves them; ſo "He would that ALL Men ſhould come to the Knowledge of the Truth and be ſaved."

As the Satisfaction our Lord made by his Death, was perfectly meritorious; ſo it was extenſive to the whole Race of Mankind: for "He gave himſelf a Ranſom for all; and taſted Death for all Men," of all Nations, Times, States, and Conditions, who ſhould repent and believe in him. — "God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſo-

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life." Nothing but Irreligion and Infidelity can exclude us the Means of Grace and Terms of Salvation. The Son of God assumed the human Nature that he might equally be related to all Mankind; and that all Mankind, upon their Compliance with his most gracious Offers, might have equal Right to his Atonement, the Benefit of Redemption. (A)

The Terms of Salvation are tendered, and the Word of Reconciliation is indifferently preached to all Men. — The Merit and Influence of this Oblation was not confined to that Age in which it was made, but had a Retrospect to Generations long-before, and supplied the Deficiencies of FORMER Dispensations.

"Christ,

(A) Before the Promulgation of the Gospel, there could be no Assurance of a Re-acceptance with God after our shameful Lapse from Obedience: Natural Religion could suggest nothing but Punishment, as the Consequence of Transgression; and even the Terms of the Law were only "*This do, and thou shalt live.*" And, notwithstanding that some Crimes of a lighter Nature were allowed to be expiated by Sacrifice, (which Sacrifices had no other Merit, save what they deriv'd from the great Passover, Jesus Christ,) yet to very many was annexed the irrevocible Sentence, "*Thou shalt surely die; - thy Blood shall be upon thee.*" — But under the Gospel-Dispensation, a general Indemnity is held out to all, upon certain Terms; and it is an high Privilege of the Church of Christ, that in it may be had "*Remission of Sins.*"

Serm. LXXII.

"Chriſt, (ſays the Apoſtle,) is the Mediator of the New Teſtament, that by Means of Death, for the Redemption of the Tranſgreſſions under the FIRST Teſtament, they which are called might receive the Promiſe of eternal Inheritance." And,

Not only ſo, but looks forward to Generations yet unborn; for, "the Promiſe, (ſaith St. Peter,) is to you and to your Childern, and to all that are afar-off, even to as many as the Lord our God ſhall call."

So that even thoſe, "who, having not the Law, have yet been a Law unto themſelves, and ſhew the Works of the Law written in their Hearts," ſhall have nothing to anſwer for in this Reſpect, but may even be capable of Juſtification by the great & unbounded Mercies of God. For, it is the poſitive & univerſal Aſſertion of the Holy Scriptures, that the propitiatory Sacrifice of Chriſt was made "for the WHOLE World - not for us only, but for ALL Mankind." — It was founded on That Guilt, in which ALL Mankind were involved. — Chriſt, as a Redeemer was promiſed immediately upon the Commencement of the general Stain, and was virtually the Lamb ſlain that Inſtant; and for this Reaſon he is repreſented as the great Antitype of Adam, and his Righteouſneſs oppoſed to Adam's Tranſgreſſion;

The

The latter Adam introducing Life in a Senſe and Capacity as extenſive, as the Death which had been occaſioned by the former. "If thro the Offence of ONE, many be dead, much more the Grace and Gift of God, which is by ONE Man, Chriſt Jeſus, hath abounded to many; therefore, as by the Offence of ONE, Judgement came upon ALL to Condemnation; ſo, by the Righteouſneſs of ONE, the free Gift came upon ALL unto Juſtification;" – which is ſo evidently true, that St. Paul heſitates not elſewhere to prove & infer the univerſal Delinquency of all Men, from Chriſt's dying to redeem all. "For, (ſays he,) we judge thus, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" and "Chriſt died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died for them."

Evaſions, (we know,) are made againſt this GENERAL Redemption by thoſe who aſſert the Doctrine of abſolute Decrees: But,

How will they anſwer it to the Sincerity of God, that he ſhould, without Diſtinction, call, invite, and exhort Sinners, in GENERAL, to Repentance; if, at the ſame Time, He has, by an eternal Decree, excluded by far the greateſt Number of them from all Poſſibility of entering into Life; But,

I need go no further to confute a Principle ſo repugnant

pugnant to all the moral Attributes and Perfections of the divine Nature, than that well-known Text, juſt before recited, "God ſo loved the World, &c."

For, It is plain that by the WORLD is there meant Mankind in GENERAL. If the WORLD, in That Place, is taken in a more reſtrained Senſe, we are to underſtand by it, any Diſtinction of Perſons rather than the Elect; For, in the Stile of Scripture, & the uſual Phraſeology of the Word, the WORLD is commonly taken in the WORST Senſe, for "the Men of the World," (i.e) for thoſe who govern themſelves wholly by the Maxims of it; but it no where ſignifies the Elect.

On the other Hand, it is uſed by our Saviour, in direct Oppoſition to the Elect: So that when it is ſaid, "God ſo loved the WORLD," the Meaning is, that every Perſon who is called to the Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, hath a Right, (if he do not forfeit it by his own Neglect,) to all the Privileges of the Goſpel, which, thro' the Merits of our Saviour, are indifferently made-over to all Chriſtians: "God being not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance;" - "He willeth not that any ſhould periſh, but that all the World might be ſaved thro Him." But further,

As this Grace is univerſal, and reaches to all Mankind

Mankind; ſo it is indefinite, and equally includes ALL Sin. In this the Words before us are expreſs: "Who forgiveth ALL thy Sin, and healeth all thine Infirmities."

The Merits of Chriſt being infinite, are of infinite Extent, & "cleanſeth from all Sin." — "Tho our Sins be as Scarlet, yet" upon Repentance, which is Amendment, "they ſhall be as white as Snow; - Tho they be red, like Crimſon, yet, they ſhall be as Wool. - If we be willing and obedient" we ſhall receive all the Benefits of his Redemption: - "The Blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth us from ALL our Sins." — There is no Aggravation which renders any Sin unpardonable, but what renders the Condition of Pardon impoſſible; as Apoſtacy only, and utter rejecting of the Chriſtian Faith.

Thus gracious and benign is our Heavenly Father towards us, expecting on our Part, only Faith, and Repentance and Amendment. - Theſe are the Terms, whereupon our actual Pardon, and complete Reconciliation with God is expreſsly ſuſpended. (A)

(A) The Doctrine of "Forgiveneſs of Sins," is not as tho already actually pardoned, but only as made pardonable, by the Satisfaction of Chriſt, upon our Repentance.

There is a *twofold* Diſtinction, therefore, of our Reconciliation with God. — The Firſt is *previous* to our Repentance, being wholly preventive of any thing we can do, abſolute, and unconditional, in which we are purely paſſive, being entirely the Work of our Redeemer, rendering Sin *only remiſſible*, Serm. LXIII. The

The Latter *subsequent* to it; being grounded on it, and suspended on the Performance of certain Conditions, in which we are to be active, rendering Sin *pardoned* to us; thus compleating our Reconciliation with God.

Sermon

SERMON LXXIII.

On the ſame Subject.

Pſalm ciii. 3. "Who forgiveth all thy Sins, and "healeth all thine Infirmities."

Having already ſhewn the Expediency, and Wiſdom of God in the Redemption of Mankind, with the Extent of it, I ſhall now,

IV. Obviate their Objections, who have pleaded againſt it. And, Firſt,

As to the Reaſonableneſs of this Sacrifice, we ſay, that it was natural to ſuppoſe that God, in Vindication of the Honour & Dignity of his Laws, which were broken, ſhould require ſome further Satisfaction and Expiation. And accordingly, we find the Cuſtom of SACRIFICING, to have prevailed univerſally over the Heathen World, in all Ages: Which, how unreaſonable ſoever an Expectation it was, to think that "the Blood of Bulls and of Goats could truly expiate Sin," yet thus much it plainly and undeniably ſhows, that it has been the common Apprehenſion

prehenſion of Mankind in all Ages, that God would not be appeaſed nor pardon Sin without ſome Puniſhment & Satisfaction; and yet, at the ſame Time, they had good Hopes, that, upon the Repentance of Sinners, God would accept ſome other Satisfaction inſtead of the Deſtruction of the Offenders. — 'Tis, therefore, plainly agreeable to right Reaſon, to believe that God, in Vindication of the Honour of his Laws, and for a Teſtimony of his Hatred againſt Sin, ſhould appoint ſome Sacrifice or Expiation for Sin, at the ſame Time that he forgives the Sinner upon his true Repentance. But,

2dly. It is well-known that Porphery, Celſus, and their Succeſſors ever ſince, (the open or hidden Enemies of Chriſtianity,) have urged that the Doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in Order to the Redemption of Mankind, is unreaſonable and incredible; & inconſiſtent with the clear Notions we have of the unlimited Perfections of God, & the finite Properties of Man; between which there is ſo wide and eternal a Difference, as ſeems to render them incapable of being joined together in one and the ſame Perſon. For, how can Wiſdom, Perfection and Happineſs itſelf, be mixed with Folly, Infirmity and Miſery? What Union can there be between what is FINITE, and That which is INFINITE?

This

This is a bold and a presumptuous Plea. For, who is he, among the Reasoners of this World, that is able to determine precisely in such obscure Points as these, what is possible or impossible to be accomplished by infinite Wisdom and almighty Power? Are our Notions of these two Beings, God & Man, so full every Way, so distinct and clear, as to satisfy us, that such an Union is in itself repugnant and altogether impossible?

Would we impartially consider what passes within our Minds, when we employ them in such nice Disquisitions as these, we should find, that all that passes THERE, is Darkness and Confusion; and that we can discern too little of either of these Natures, to be able to pronounce, with any Assurance, that it is impossible for them to be joined together in One Person. Indeed,

We have no just Idea, of the Manner in which such Union may be effected; but so neither have we, of the Manner of that Union which is between our Souls and Bodies. — an Union which we can as little explain or comprehend, as even that of the Deity with the Humanity; and which yet we can no more doubt of, than we can of our own Being and Subsistence.

Will the most keen and piercing Wit among the

Men, ſay, that he perceives plainly, how a corporial Being can be joined to an incorporeal? And what are the common Ties that hold them: - how they act upon each other; move and are moved, by Turns; and what kind of Contract that is, by which ſuch Motions are mutually communicated? No: Theſe are Secrets, which we can no Ways, by any Strength of Thought, fathom; And which, perhaps we ſhould have been apt to imagine inconſiſtent & impoſſible Speculations had not Experience taught us, that things are really ſo, tho' we cannot poſſibly, by ſearching, find them out. Indeed,

It muſt readily be acknowledged, that human Reaſon could never have diſcovered ſuch a Method as this, for the making Peace between Sinners and an offended God, without expreſs Revelation. But then neither, on the other Side, when once this Method is made known, is there any ſuch Difficulty or Inconceivableneſs in it, as can reaſonably make a wiſe & conſiderate Man call in Queſtion the Truth of a well-atteſted Revelation, merely upon that Account: which, indeed, any plain Abſurdity or Contradiction, in the Matter of a Doctrine pretended to be revealed, would, it muſt be confeſſed, unavoidably effect. For, as to the Poſſibility of the Incarnation of the Son of God, whatever Myſteriouſneſs there

confeſ-

confessedly was in the Manner of it; yet, as to the Thing itself, there is evidently no more Unreasonableness in believing the Possibility of it, than in believing the Union of our Soul and Body, or any other certain Truth, which we plainly see implies no Contradiction in the thing itself, at the same Time that we are sensible we cannot discover the Manner how it is done.

Had the Spirits of Men been once unbodied, and had God revealed to them in that State of Separation, that he designed them for another Station in a lower World; and, in Order to it, would cloath them with gross and sensible Matter, and make them act continually in Concert with fleshly Organs, and with Dependence upon them, no doubt but One of these forward Reasoners would have concluded immediately, that the thing proposed was unphilosophical and absurd; and, therefore, that either the Revelation did not really come from God, or that This could not be the Sense of it. For could Body and Spirit, things so totally different, any-ways meet together, and compose one entire Subject? Or, how could they, when thus met, have any possible Influence on each other?

These, therefore, are immodest and unjustifiable Ways of Reasoning, which would persuade us to re-

ject Truths, on the Account of ſome ſuppoſ'd Impoſſibilities, of which it is manifeſtly impoſſible, that we ſhould have any clear and adequate Conception. And, therefore, in all ſuch Caſes, it becomes us not to ſay, what can, or cannot be done, or what the Nature of things will, or will not admit of. The ſhort and only ſure Point, upon which Controverſies of this Kind muſt turn, is, to ſee what God, in his holy Word, has aſſured us concerning them.

As to the Incredibility of the Doctrine, that God ſhould make ſo great a Condeſcenſion to his Creatures, and that a Perſon of ſuch Dignity, as the only Begotten Son of God, ſhould vouchſafe to give himſelf a Sacrifice for the Sins of Men: — He that duly conſiders, that it is no Diminution to the Glory and Greatneſs of the Father of all things, to inſpect, govern, and direct every thing by his All-wiſe Providence through the whole Creation; to take care even of the meaneſt of his Creatures, ſo that not a "Sparrow falls to the Ground, or a Hair of our Head periſhes" without his Knowledge; and to obſerve exactly every Particle even of inanimate Matter in the Univerſe: he, (I ſay,) who duly conſiders This, cannot with Reaſon think it any real Diſparagement to the Son of God, (though it was, indeed, a moſt wonderful and amazing Inſtance of Humility

Humility & Condescension,) that he should concern himself so far for sinful Men, as to appear in Their Nature to reveal the Will of God more clearly to them, — to give himself a Sacrifice and Expiation for their Sins, and to bring them to Repentance and Eternal Life. Indeed,

If we will consider things impartially, so far is it from being truly any Diminution of the Greatness and Glory of God, to send his Son into the World for the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind; that, on the contrary, it is a Means of bringing the very greatest Honour to the Government of God, that can be imagined. For, What can be imagined more honourable, and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things; than to show forth his Mercy and Goodness, in forgiving the Sins of frail and fallible Creatures, and suffering himself to be reconciled to them upon their true Repentance; and yet at the same Time to cause such an Expiation to be made for Sin, by the Sufferings and Death of his own Son in Their Nature, as might be an abundant Evidence of his irreconcileable Hatred against Sin, a just Vindication of the Authority and Dignity of his Laws, and a sufficient and effectual Warning to deter Men from Sin, to create in them the greatest Dread and Detestation of it, and for ever to terrify

them from venturing upon wilful Tranſgreſſion and Diſobedience? — It is true, no Man can take upon him certainly to ſay, but that God by his abſolute Sovereignty and Authority, might, if he had ſo pleaſed, have pardoned Sin upon Repentance, without any Sacrifice or Expiation at all. But This Method of doing it by the Death of Chriſt, is more wiſe and fit, and evidently more proper and effectual to diſcountenance and prevent Preſumption, to diſcourage Men from repeating their Tranſgreſſions, to give them a deep Senſe of the heinous Nature of Sin, & to convince them of the Excellency and Importance of the Laws of God, and the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of paying Obedience to them; Foraſmuch as it ſhows us, that at the ſame Time that God was willing to ſave the Sinner; yet, leaſt Incouragement ſhould be given to Sin by letting it go unpuniſhed, he did not think fit to forgive the Tranſgreſſions of Men without great Sufferings in Our Nature, and to put away the Guilt of our Sins but upon ſuch difficult Terms as the Death of his own Son. So that in this Diſpenſation, "Juſtice and Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteouſneſs & Peace have kiſſed each other." And by how much the greater the Dignity of the Perſon was, who gave himſelf thus a Sacrifice for the Sins of Men; of ſo much the greater

Weight

Weight and Force in this Argument to deter Men for the future from Sin, and to convince them of the Neceſſity of Obedience. Wherefore, ſo far is it from being true, that the Conſideration of the Dignity of the Perſon ſuffering, is a real Objection againſt the Credibility of the Doctrine; that, on the contrary, That very Conſideration contains the higheſt Vindication imaginable, of the Greatneſs, Honour, and Authority of the Laws of God; and at the ſame Time, the greateſt poſſible Inſtance or Expreſſion of his Mercy and Compaſſion towards Men, agreeable to our natural Notions of the Divine Attributes. But further,

It is objected, that this Method of the Expiation of Sin by the Suffering of Chriſt ſeems to argue ſome Defect and Want of Goodneſs in God, as if he needed ſome external Motive, and was not himſelf diſpoſed to forgive Sinners.

To which we anſwer that God did not want Goodneſs to have forgiven Sin freely without any Satisfaction: but his Wiſdom thought beſt, NOT to give Encouragement to Sin, by too eaſy a Forgiveneſs, and without ſome remarkable Inſtance of his ſevere Diſpleaſure againſt it; & therefore his greater Goodneſs and Compaſſion to Mankind, deviſed this Way

to ſave the Sinner without giving the leaſt Countenance and Encouragement to Sin.

For God to ſave us ANY Way, was exceſſive Goodneſs and Mercy: But! to do it by ſubſtituting his only begotten Son, to ſuffer in our Stead, and overruling this Event to the beſt of Ends, is a Condeſcenſion ſo amazing, that, had not God been pleaſed to ſtoop to it, Man could not, (almoſt without Blaſphemy,) have either thought of, or deſired it. Again,

It hath been objected & ſaid, That if the Pardon of our Sins was ſo dearly purchaſed, - and our Offences done-away at ſo great a Price, how can they be ſaid to be FREELY forgiven?

In Anſwer to this, we ſay, That it is an exceeding Grace and Favour of God to admit of the Tranſlation of Puniſhment due to us, and to accept the Sufferings of another in our Stead, when He might have juſtly exacted it of us in Perſon.

God alſo FREELY forgave us, in Reſpect of any Neceſſity that lay upon him to forgive us either This Way, or any other; He might have refuſed us "the Comfort of his Help again;" and ſuffered us to die in our Sins. But He had Mercy upon us, & freely forgave us thro the Merits of his Son, and "juſtified us freely by his Grace, thro the Redemption that is in

in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation for us thro Faith in his Blood;" exacting nothing from us, on our Part, but an After-Obedience, and Faith in Him! (A) It

(A) To be *justified*, and to be accounted righteous, stand for one and the same thing. & Both import our being delivered from the Guilt of Sin, and entitled to the Favour of God. These differ from God's intending from all Eternity to save us, as much as a Decree differs from the Execution of it. A Man is *then only* justified, when he is freed from Wrath, and in at Peace with God: and tho' this is freely offered to us in the Gospel thro' Christ; yet it is applied to none but to such only as come within those qualifications and Conditions as are set before us in the Gospel.

That God pardons Sin, and receives us into Favour only thro the Death of Christ, is so fully expressed in the Gospel, that it is not possible for any to doubt of it, if they attentively read, and firmly believe the New Testament. Nor is it less evident, that it is not offered to us absolutely, and without Conditions and Limitations. These Conditions are *Repentance*, with which "Remission of Sins" is often joined; & *Faith*, but "a Faith that worketh by Love," that "purifies the Heart," and that "keeps the Commandments of God:" such a Faith as shews itself to be alive by good Works, by Acts of Charity, and by every Act of Obedience; by which we demonstrate that we truly and firmly believe the divine Authority of our Saviour and his Doctrine.

Such a Faith as This, justifies; but not as it is a Work, or meritorious Action, that of its own Nature puts us in the Favour of God, and makes us truly just; but as it is the Condition upon which the Mercy of God is offered to us by Christ: for then we correspond to his Design of coming into the World, "that he might redeem us from all Iniquity," (i.e) justify; and "purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works;" (i.e) sanctify us; "thereby bringing many Sons to Righteousness." Serm. LXXIII. Upon

It was, in Effect, FREELY too, notwithſtanding the great Price which was paid for our Redemption, becauſe This Price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; He found out This Ranſom for us; and paid it in the Perſon of his Son.

Againſt this it is objected further, and ſaid, That an INNOCENT Perſon's ſuffering for another, is not only unjuſt, but cruel: That it ſeems to be more unreaſonable, than the ſacrificing of Beaſts among the Jews, or even of Men among the Heathens, and of their Sons and Daughters: becauſe This is the offering-up the SON OF GOD; the moſt innocent, & the moſt excellent Perſon that ever was.

To this it is replied, That if we conſider the Manner, and the Deſign of it, the thing will appear quite otherwiſe. As

Upon our bringing ourſelves, therefore, under theſe Qualifications and Conditions, we are actually in the Favour of God; our Sins are pardoned; and we are entitled to eternal Life.

Our Faith and Repentance are not the valuable Conſiderations for which God pardons & juſtifies; That is done merely by the Death of Chriſt; which God, out of the Riches of his Grace, having provided for us, and offered to us; Juſtification is, upon theſe Accounts, ſaid to be *free*: there being nothing on our Part, which either did, or could procure it. But ſtill our Faith, which includes our Hope, our Love, our Repentance and Obedience, is the Condition that makes us capable of receiving the Benefits of his Redemption and free Grace.

This manifeſts in what Senſe we believe, that we are juſtified both *freely*, and yet *thro' Chriſt*; and alſo *thro' Faith*, as the Condition indiſpenſibly neceſſary on our Part. See Note (A) page 127, 128.

As to the Manner of it, There is no Injuſtice or Cruelty in it, ſuppoſing the Sufferings to be VOLUNTARY. God did not command, but accepted his Son's Obedience for us, who, of his own free Will, choſe and underwent it: the beſt of Ends being anſwered by it.

If the Party offended be willing to accept of the Commutation, & the Party that ſuffers, doth it voluntarily, there can be no Injuſtice that one ſhould ſuffer in another's ſtead, & make Satisfaction for the Crimes and Faults which another hath committed, becauſe the innocent Perſon, having a free Diſpoſal of himſelf, may freely offer his own Life or Liberty in Exchange for the forfeited Life of another; and the Judge, if he thinks fit, may accept it. This is an Act of great heroical Goodneſs; which, tho' Juſtice cannot require to be done, yet is in no way contrary to the Rules of Juſtice to perform.

This takes off all Injuſtice from God, and leaves the Objector no Room to reply.

It was the voluntary Pleaſure of God, the Son; his free and unconſtrained Love which moved him to undertake the glorious Office of Redeemer, to become the Surety for Man, and to diſcharge what was due to the divine Juſtice; and the divine Juſtice was willing to accept this Price, as a full Diſ-

charge on Man's Account. — And, What would proud & erring human Wiſdom object to this?

Nay, ſo far from objecting, we ought to rejoice, & think ourſelves unſpeakably happy, in that we have a God, who "ſo loved us, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the End that all who believe in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life."

Beſides, If it were unjuſt that an INNOCENT Perſon ſhould ſuffer for the GUILTY, the very Notion of a Sacrifice would be quite deſtroy'd; which requires, that the Innocent ſhould ſuffer for the Guilty. The Perfection that was expected in the Beaſts that were ſet apart for Sacrifice, and their ſuffering for thoſe Sins they never committed, nor were ever capable of committing, ſufficiently ſignifies that Innocence was required in a Sacrifice; and if the Sacrifice of Beaſts were Types of any other meritorious Sacrifice, they muſt prefigure the Death & Sacrifice of a moſt innocent Perſon, of that Lamb of God without Blemiſh, and without Spot. — And then,

If we conſider the End and Deſign of this Permiſſion of Chriſt's Death, and the Application of it to the Purpoſe of a GENERAL Expiation; we cannot but acknowledge and even adore the Grace and Mercy ſhewn in it. — For, by this Means God did at once put an End to all that unreaſonable and bloody Way

of

of Worship, which had been so long practised in the World: — and, after this one Sacrifice, (which was so infinitely dear to God,) the Benefit of Expiation was not to be expected in any other Way; all other Sacrifices being worthless, and vain in Comparison of This: — Accordingly, it hath ever since obtained this Effect, of making all other Sacrifices to cease, in all Parts of the World where Christianity hath prevailed. — But further,

It hath been asked, how could the Messiah, (being God, as well as Man,) suffer, since the Divine Nature is not subject to any Sense of Misery?

It is answered, That our Blessed Saviour suffered only in his HUMAN Nature, — That Nature of Man which he took upon him: but since it was united to the DIVINE Nature, & there was a most intimate Conjunction of both Natures in the One Person of the Son, there did from thence result a true & proper Communication of Names, Characters, and Properties: So that the "very and eternal Son of God" may rightly be said to have suffered whatever the Man Christ Jesus endured in the Flesh for Sinners, because the Properties of each Nature separated, may reasonably be affirmed of that Person in whom the two Natures are united.

In the Courſe of this Life, the Divine Nature performed the Miracles, and the Human ſuffered the Afflictions: - At the Time of his Death, when his human Soul and Body were divided, his Divine Nature, (tho quieſcent for a Seaſon *) ſtill continu'd with him. The "Temple of his Body" deſtroyed by Death, himſelf by his Divinity, "after three Days, (according to the Scriptures,) raiſed up." The Body fell, the human Soul was ſeparated; but the Godhead reſtored the Fabrick, being ſtill joined to it. Otherwiſe it could not be true, what he affirmed, [viz] that He himſelf would raiſe it up, "having Power to lay it down, & to take it again."

Upon the whole, Inſtead of diſputing, with preſumptuous Blindneſs againſt the Method which God hath choſen for the Salvation of Mankind; let us be wiſe enough to accept his Mercy with obedient Thankfulneſs.— Is it for us to ſay, on What Conditions it is fit for God to forgive Sins? — Or, do we know all the poſſible Efficacy of the Death of his Son?

The minuteſt Inſect, the ſimpleſt Vegetable, every Particle of inanimate Matter, contains in its Nature an Abyſs of Wonders, which no human Underſtanding can fathom. And is there nothing of Myſtery in

(*) See Pſalm 22, 1. Matt. 27, 46. and Mark 15, 34.

in the Incarnation of the Son of God? Can no Benefit redound to Mankind through his Death, but what we muſt needs be able to trace through the Darkneſs of the divine Counſels?

"All things have I ſeen in the Days of my Vanity: the upright Man periſheth in his Righteouſneſs:" yet God is juſt. — How much more, when He who loved us waſhed us in his Blood, and was made a willing Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World?

It is but a very little Way that the Underſtanding of Man, while he is here on Earth, is able to advance in the Knowledge of heavenly things. "The Sufferings of Chriſt, & the Glory to follow; the Preaching of the Goſpel, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from Heaven, are things which the Angels deſire to look into." The Conceit, that on Subjects ſo awful or on any Subjects, nothing can be true, that lies beyond the Limits of our Comprehenſion, if it do not take the Road of Enthuſiaſm, will naturally lead us, either to diſbelieve the divine Revelation, or, which is much the ſame, to explain it into nothing.

"Great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs!" Far too great for the Graſp of our Knowledge; - we can aſpire towards it only with our Heart and Affections.

This Acquaintance with so divine a Mystery we shall do well, (however unworthy,) to desire, and cultivate.

"For this Cause, I bow my Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven & Earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened with Might by his Spirit, in the inner Man, that Christ may dwell in your Hearts by Faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in Love, may be able to comprehend, with all Saints, and know the Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge;" which they only know, who themselves are "rooted and grounded in Love."

The amazing, unsearchable Riches of Love, in the Breast of the Almighty Father, which moved him to give his "Only-Begotten," in whom he was always well-pleased, for wretched Men, who had offended him; - that unparalleled and astonishing Affection, which induced the glorious Son of God to become a Man and a Sacrifice, to bear himself the punishment of our Sins, and by his Holy Spirit to help our Infirmities, is never perhaps to be understood fully. Neither by Man, nor by any created Being. The Holy Trinity alone knows what it is to Love in such a Manner as this. It is an Abyss of

Mercy,

Mercy, which neither we, nor Angels, are able to pry into; and which God alone, who contrived it, can fully explain and comprehend.

It was a Love, therefore, in all Reſpects worthy of that God, who is good, and does good; whereby he was induced to reſtore his ſinful Creatures to a Capacity of that Happineſs from which they were fallen; — A Capacity of rendering themſelves infinitely and eternally happy in the Enjoyment of himſelf; — It was a Love, - (But it is impoſſible to carry this Notion of it to a juſt Height,) directly contrary to all the Maxims of Self-Love, and to all the Motives of Intereſt or pretended Merit among Men; - It was a Love in all Reſpects ſo wonderful, - and ſurpaſſing, - and worthy of God, that, methinks, I hear our Bleſſed Lord delivering theſe Words, in a very high Strain of Admiration himſelf. "God SO "loved the World, that He gave his only-begotten "Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not "periſh, but have everlaſting Life."

Let us forbear, therefore, to wade further into the Depth of this great Myſtery, God manifeſted in the Fleſh, and dying to redeem us; and let us ſatisfy ourſelves with believing it, as God has revealed it, without indulging our Curioſity in an unprofitable

Search after the Reaſons which induced God to order this ſtupendous Work in ſo inconceivable a Manner, but rather draw from thence ſuch Inferences, as may render it profitable unto Godlineſs; and which it will readily furniſh us, for the Subject of our next Diſcourſe.

Sermon

SERMON LXXIV.

On the same Subject.

Psalm ciii. 3. "Who forgiveth all thy Sins, and "healeth all thine Infirmities."

The Inferences from the great Doctrine of Redemption, (to be the Subject of the present Discourse,) are, First,

As from the other Benefits of God to Mankind, so more especially from This of Redemption do we infer the Wisdom of God in it, and his Goodness towards us. — And first,

Of his Wisdom in it. — This was the ineffable Contrivance of the divine Council, that God & Man should be joined in one Person, that so Man might become a Sacrifice for Sin, and as God, make his Sacrifice worthy to be accepted, his Manhood giving him a Capacity to suffer, and his Godhead giving a Value to his Sufferings.

Thus is God magnified in all his Excellencies, having to the Triumph of his Mercy out of the hidden Treasures of his Wisdom excited by his Love, found an Expedient how both Sin should be punished and the

Search after the Reaſons which induced God to order this ſtupendous Work in ſo inconceivable a Manner, but rather draw from thence ſuch Inferences, as may render it profitable unto Godlineſs; and which it will readily furniſh us, for the Subject of our next Diſcourſe.

Sermon

SERMON LXXIV.

the Sinner pardonned: his Juſtice at the ſame Time fully ſatisfied, his Majeſty unminiſhed, his Truth preſerved entire and inviolate, by a Perſon of infinite Dignity interpoſing in the Offender's Room, anſwering the ſtricteſt Demands of offended Omnipotence, and doing not only Right, but Honour to every one of his eſſential Attributes and divine Perfections. — But,

Secondly, Not only his Wiſdom, but alſo his Goodneſs towards us.

When the Authority of God, &c. (under)

When the Authority of God's Laws were trampled on and diminiſhed by Sin, it was not conſiſtent with the infinite Wiſdom of the ſupreme Governor of all things, to remit the Puniſhment due to ſuch Tranſgreſſion without ſome greater Satisfaction than Man could poſſibly make. But,

That the only-begotten Son of God, who was perfectly happy in the Boſom of the Father, ſhould voluntarily condeſcend to aſſume our frail Nature, &

from

from being "in the Form of God," and moſt high in "the Glory of his Father," ſhould diveſt himſelf of it and ſubmit to ſuch cruel Sufferings, and to a Death ſo ignominious for us Men and for our Salvation, is ſuch an Inſtance of Goodneſs and tender Mercy as we can never embrace and entertain with ſufficient Joy and Thankfulneſs. "O the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out." Herein is the Love of God to Man perfected, that as of his Goodneſs he made us, and all Creatures for our Subſiſtence; and thro his Providence wonderfully preſerves us; ſo when we "by Tranſgreſſion fell," for the Ranſom of our Souls from eternal Ruin "he ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," that "he might be the Propitiation for our Sins, and that we thro him might live." And!

After ſuch an amazing Inſtance of his Love towards us, as This; what may we not reaſonably hope for, and promiſe ourſelves, from the divine Goodneſs? "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall He not with him alſo freely give us all things?"

Had we been the moſt innocent and righteous, and the deareſt Friends to him in the World, what could

could he have done more? How could He have possibly testified greater Love to us? Or the Son, in being willing to be given for our Redemption?

Here was Goodness, both of the Father and the Son, without Bounds; and Love without Parallel or Example!

The highest Pitch that human Affection ever arriv'd to, was, to "die for one's FRIEND:" "But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, & Enemies to him by evil Works, He gave his Son to die for us;" - "In this was the Love of Christ made perfect, in that he gave his Life a Ransom for many." — But further,

Secondly, Hath God so lov'd us, as to give his only begotten Son to die for us? and Christ, as to redeem us with his own Blood? Then,

How full of Comfort is this Doctrine to us? If we believed that our Justification was founded upon our inherent Justice, or Sanctification, as the Consideration on which we receive it, we should have just Cause of Fear and Dejection; since we could not reasonably promise ourselves so great a Blessing upon so poor and weak a Consideration: But, when we know that this is only the Condition of it, then, when we feel it sincerely received and believed, and

carefully obſerved by us, we may conclude that we are JUSTIFIED ; - But, we are by no Means to think, that our certain Perſuaſion of Chriſt's having died for us in particular, or the Certainty of our Salvation thro him, is an Act of SAVING Faith, much leſs that we are juſtified by it. (A) Many things have been too crudely ſaid upon this Subject which have given great Advantage to Sectaries, and furniſhed them with much Matter of Reproach. We ought to believe firmly, that Chriſt died for all penitent and converted Sinners; and, when we feel theſe Characters in ourſelves, we may from thence juſtly infer, that He died for us, & that we are of the Number of thoſe who ſhall be ſaved thro' him : but yet, if we fall from this State, in which we now are, we may and muſt likewiſe forfeit thoſe Hopes; and therefore, muſt " work-out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling."

Our believing that we ſhall be ſaved by Chriſt, is no Act of divine Faith; ſince every Act of Faith muſt be founded on ſome divine Revelation. It is only a Collection or Inference that we may make from this general Propoſition, that Chriſt is the Propitiation for the Sins of thoſe who do truly repent and

(A) See this particularly ſpoken to, Vol. vii. in the 4th Note, in the Diſcourſe on Faith. — See alſo Vol. 2. page 105, 106.

and believe his Gospel, and from those Reflections and Observations that we make on ourselves both in general and particular, by which we conclude that we do truly repent and believe; and consequently shall be saved, if we continue in the same all the Days of our Life. — But further,

Hath God so loved us, as to give his only begotten Son to die for us? and Christ, as to redeem us with his own Blood? Then,

Let this Consideration be a Motive to increase our Affections, and bring us still nearer and nearer towards God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. It hath the most powerful Tendency to inspire us with Humility, and Gratitude, and Diligence.

Setting aside all other Engagements to this Duty, it is but reasonable that we should return him Love for Love: and what it is to love God, God himself hath expressly told us, "He that loveth me, keepeth my Commandments:" and again, "He that saith, I love God, and yet keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him."

Christ, by suffering such things for us, hath laid upon us the strongest Obligations to love and obey him. The Thoughts of what He hath done and suffered for us, should be the Ground of lasting Af-

fections and pious Reſolutions towards him, & make us willing, rather indeed, ambitious, to do and ſuffer any thing for him. Indeed!

What ſhould we not willingly part-with for him, who did not think his own Life and Glory dear to him for our Sakes? — Did he die for us, - and ſhall we refuſe to live to his Glory? — Did he become miſerable for our Sakes, - and ſhall we think it too much to become holy and happy for our own Sakes, and his, who was born, and died, to redeem us? (A)

Such Affections and holy Reſolutions ſhould the Conſideration of our Saviour's Death and Paſſion excite in us. — Again,

The Love of our Brother is alſo hereby enforced. It is the Apoſtle's Argument: "Beloved, if God ſo loved us, then ought we alſo to love one another."

The Motives to this Duty are innumerable; but the divine Philanthropy, (as now under Conſideration,) eſpecially oblidges us to this: and that, as it is a Duty highly excellent in itſelf, and alſo well-pleaſing to God. For,

Hereby

(A) God's Glory and our Happineſs are ſo inſeparably conjoined that we cannot aim right at either, but we muſt hit both. — God has not throughout all his Creation, an Enſign of Honour ſo truly worthy of him, as That of a divine and pious Soul, that reflects his Image, & ſhines back his own Glories upon him.

Hereby we become as Gods to our Fellow-Creatures, and diſpenſe to them the Bleſſings of Life, even as God hath given to us, and ſo become the Children of our Father which is in Heaven, by being "good Stewards of his manifold Gifts." And,

Can we otherwiſe than be dear to him, and well-pleaſing in his Sight, when we thus endeavour to reſemble him in his moſt adorable Perfections? eſpecially after his having aſſured us, that "them that honour him," (which we in an eſpecial Manner do by every Act of Goodneſs and Beneficence, *) "He will honour: and they that deſpiſe him," (which we eſpecially do by every Act of Malice and Wickedneſs,) "ſhall be lightly eſteemed."

"Be ye, therefore, Followers of God as dear Children, and walk in Love." — Again,

Hath God redeemed us from our former Sins by the Blood of his Son, and made a new Covenant with us, whereby we are enabled to walk in Newneſs of Life, & to ſhow forth all the Virtues of it, thereby attaining the higheſt Perfection of his Favour here, and Joy and Glory hereafter? Then, how thankful ought we to be to him for theſe his unſpeakable Mercies?

As

(*) See John 15, 8.

As we are obliged to thank God for temporal, ſo more eſpecially for eternal Bleſſings. — As much as the reaſonable Soul, in Dignity of Nature & Purity of Subſtance excels our Body — as much as the bliſſful Raviſhments of the Spirit, ſurpaſs the dull Satisfactions of Senſe — as much as Eternity exceeds that ſhort Space of Time which terminates this tranſitory Life, ſo, in Proportion, ſhould our Delight in, and Gratitude for ſpiritual Bleſſings, ſurpaſs our Affections and Thankſgivings for temporal Accommodations. We are, indeed, greatly indebted to God for our Creation and Preſervation, but we are much more ſo for our Redemption by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, whereby we obtain the Means of Grace, and Hopes of Glory.

If for Succeſs in our wordly Affairs — for eſcaping threatened Dangers, and defeating the Deſigns of our Enemies, we make our Song for Victory, how much more ought we to do this, for the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, and the happy Progreſs of our ſpiritual Concerns; - for the conquering Sin and Satan, thoſe irreconcileable Enemies to our everlaſting Peace?

" The Lord hath made us, & not we ourſelves;" &, having made us, was not forgetful of the Workmanſhip of his Hands, but hath preſerved us thro' Life; and, " tho' we have many a Time provoked him

him to Anger," by our manifold Offences, "yet ſuffered he not his whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe," but "hath thought upon his Promiſe," and "remembered us in our Sins," and "ſent his Son to redeem us."

"O! that Men would, therefore, praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men; that they would tell out his Works with Gladneſs, and ſhew forth his Praiſe with Thankſgiving!"

We are apt to admire and extol that Wiſdom which finds out ſuch Means to an End as human Wiſdom was the leaſt apt to deviſe, and that Goodneſs which relieves us in our greateſt Diſtreſſes:

And! Shall the amazing Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God the Father, then, who hath been ſo unſpeakably provident for us, in our greateſt Neceſſities, in reconciling us to himſelf by ſuch an amazing Inſtance of Invention, as the Incarnation, Sufferings, & Death of the Son of God, thereby delivering us out of all our Afflictions, be paſſed by, unnoticed? when even the very Angels deſire to look into it, and do for ever praiſe him for his wonderful Wiſdom & Goodneſs in it? God forbid!

Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name: Bleſs the Lord, O my

Soul, and forget not all his Benefits; who forgiveth all thy Sins, and healeth all thine Infirmities; who saveth thy Life from Destruction; and crowneth thee with tender Mercy and Loving Kindness."

In a Word, as in Order to any Subject of frequent Meditation yielding us constant Pleasure and Satisfaction, it is requisite that it be capable of commanding the Approbation of the Understanding, of exciting and fixing our strongest Affections, and of raising as well as keeping up the Expectation of future Good; so, in Redemption by Christ, all the rich Varieties of Colouring, necessary to render a Subject of Contemplation completely glorious, meet, as in the Covenant of Heaven, (Gen. ix. 12.) from the infinite Sublime to the finite Beautiful, and even down from these to the Mournful and Sympathetic.

His Divinity fills the Mind with adoring Reverence and holy Confidence. His Humanity, while it excites Affection, and encourages the Soul to look to God without Fear or Dread, sheds such a dignifying (under)

other Benefits to us. — But further,

And to show "that we have a due Sense of all his "Mercies, and that our Hearts are unfeignedly "thankful," we are to be careful to "show forth his "Praise

"Praiſe, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives; "by giving up ourſelves to his Service, & by walk- "ing before him in true Holineſs and Righteouſneſs "all the Days of our Life."

The INWARD Sentiments of our Hearts are to be OUTWARDLY expreſſed, by living to his Glory; for, "hereby, (ſaith Chriſt,) is my Father glorified, in that we bring-forth much Fruit;" and hereby do we know that we are duly impreſſed with a Senſe of his Kindneſs to us, "if we keep his Commandments."

And! What other than this can we, in Gratitude for his great and manifold Mercies unto us, render unto him? — When he hath done and ſuffered ſo great things for us, ſhall we be content to give him the Honour of our Lips only when our hearts are far from him? Or, if we ſhould offer it unto him, will he be pleaſed with it, or accept it? — But,

To honour and obey, is no leſs proper, than our bounden Duty and Intereſt. For,

We muſt always remember, that none will be for- given and made happy by the Means of Chriſt, but they who are reformed & made holy by his Means; That this Sacrifice is not to ſtand inſtead of our Re- pentance & Amendment; but, (as we have ſhown,) is the Conſideration which induces God FIRST to

The glorious Subject of the Union of [illegible] tures, whilst it strikes Expression dumb, affords the most unbounded Room for spiritual Meditation, and must forever remain, in this Respect, inexhaustible. We might proceed on the Wings of Meditation from Earth to his eternal Throne in Heaven, where He reigned before all Worlds; from that Throne to the Manger, from the Manger to the Cross, and from the Cross to his eternal Throne again, without the least Want of Matter for holy Meditation. — The Works of Creation are admirable; Providence is beyond our Comprehension; but Redemption is what "the Angels desire to look into." Indeed, &c. (under)

Indeed, hearty Thanks are distinctly due from us to each Person of the sacred Trinity, contributing in this great Benefit to us.

To God, (the Father,) receding from his own Right, in Complyance with our Necessity; remitting the Obligation to Punishmeet incurred, and becoming exorable to us, whilst Angels, that are Creatures of a far higher Rank, remain unpardoned in their Guilt:

To God, (the Son,) becoming our Surety to purchase this Grace for us, himself satisfying for our Sins, tho by the greatest Debasement: And,

To God, (the Holy Ghost,) sanctifying our Natures, whereby to capacitate us to receive the same.

The whole Divinity manifesting the greatest Clemency, no less in forgiving Sins, than in giving all other Benefits to us. — But further,

And to show "that we have a due Sense of all his "Mercies, and that our Hearts are unfeignedly "thankful," we are to be careful to "show forth his "Praise

"Praiſe, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives; "by giving up ourſelves to his Service, & by walk- "ing before him in true Holineſs and Righteouſneſs "all the Days of our Life."

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And! What other than this can we, in Gratitude for his great and manifold Mercies unto us, render unto him? — When he hath done and ſuffered ſo great things for us, ſhall we be content to give him the Honour of our Lips only when our hearts are far from him? Or, if we ſhould offer it unto him, will he be pleaſed with it, or accept it? — But,

To honour and obey, is no leſs proper, than our bounden Duty and Intereſt. For,

We muſt always remember, that none will be forgiven and made happy by the Means of Chriſt, but they who are reformed & made holy by his Means; That this Sacrifice is not to ſtand inſtead of our Repentance & Amendment; but, (as we have ſhown,) is the Conſideration which induces God FIRST to

work in us pious diſpoſitions; and THEN to accept us, if we cultivate and exert them faithfully. (A)

Perhaps, the Benefit of this Sacrifice may extend, in a very valuable, though inferior Degree, even to thoſe who have little or no Knowledge of Him, who offered it. But, in ſuch Queſtions we have no Concern. - Our Buſineſs is to take-care that it may extend to us, by embracing, with an active as well as joyful Faith, the gracious Tenders of the Goſpel-Diſpenſation. For,

It is not to be ſuppoſed that God ſhould have taken ſo arduous a Method to cleanſe us from our Sins, with no other Intent than that afterwards we ſhould live as we pleaſed; - No: He came to "redeem us," but ſo as "from all Iniquity," and to "purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works." — If therefore, "from our being cleanſed, we return again to our former Impurities, or rather, continue in them," what will all the Merits of our Redeemer profit us? Only to aggravate our After-Impiety. Though

(A) The Reconciliation which was made by the Death of Chriſt, between God & Man, is not abſolute and without Conditions. He has eſtabliſhed the Covenant, and has performed all that was incumbent on him, as both the Prieſt and the Sacrifice, to do and to ſuffer; and he offers This to the World, that it may be cloſed with by them, on the Terms on which it is propoſed, and if they do not accept of it upon theſe Conditions, and perform what is enjoined them, they can have no Share in it. See Note (A) page, 139.

Though the Son of God "was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, & bruiſed for our Iniquities; & the Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon Him," yet we are not ſo healed, as to be paſt all Danger of relapſing; - we are not ſo reſcued from the Bondage of Corruption, as, (at all Events,) to be ſecure of God's Favour for the future, without our own ſincere Complyance and Improvement. (A) No.

The Chriſtian Religion is a State of Trial & Conflict. He that bought us with a Price, hath a Right to our Obedience; and at the ſame Time that He exempted us from the Puniſhment of our Sins, he laid upon us an Obligation to forſake them.

Hence, then, appears the abſolute Neceſſity of our own Reformation: for God, in this very Diſpenſation of Pardon and Mercy, hath teſtified a more irreconciliable Hatred againſt Sin, than if he had immediately puniſhed it, in the Deſtruction of the Offender.

Had God, out of his infinite Goodneſs, freely vouchſafed a full & abſolute Pardon to all paſt Sins, without exacting any Satisfaction; or by accepting of ſuch as ſinful Man could have made, we muſt indeed have

(A) See Note (A) page 127. Ditto, page 139. Ditto, pag 160.

have admired the exceeding Abundance of his Mercy; but then, his infinite Hatred againſt Sin would not have been ſo clearly diſplayed. Whereas, by God's pardoning the Sinner, at the ſame Time that He inflicts the heavieſt Puniſhment of Sin upon the beſt and moſt innocent Perſon that ever lived, who voluntarily choſe to undergo theſe Sufferings for us, This is a manifeſt Proof what a tender Concern God hath for the Honour of his Laws, and of the fatal Conſequence of Sin.

If God, (when he was about to diſplay the infinite Abundance of his Mercy in the Forgiveneſs of our Sins,) would not accept of any ſmaller Ranſom than the Blood of his only-begotten Son, what Hope can any Man who continues in his Sins, have, that he "ſhall eſcape the juſt Judgment of God?" If ſuch terrible Afflictions fell upon the beloved Son of God, for the Sins of OTHERS, what heavy Vengeance muſt we expect, if, by neglecting this great Salvation, we receive the Puniſhment of OUR own Sins? If the Pardon of our Offences was done away upon ſuch HARD Terms, then ſurely we ſhould be very careful not to renew the Paſſion of our Lord by freſh Provocations; - not to do any thing whereby to "crucify the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open Shame?" and thereby more ſtrongly aſſure our own Damnation. But, Laſtly

Lastly, From the Extensiveness of this Benefit, we infer all possible Carefulness how we limit the Glory of it, or Christ hath offered the Terms of Salvation to ALL Christians indifferently: LET US ALL, then, be indifferently persuaded to the Practice of them: Let each of us for ourselves thankfully embrace the Offers of his Grace and Favours unto us, and duly improve by them, and doubtless we shall as universally receive the Benefits of them. (A)

I shall Conclude all with that excellent Form of general Thanksgiving, given us by our Church; as it, at once, recalls to our Minds the foregoing Particulars, and, at the same Time, begs of God the Assistance to walk worthy of them.

"Almighty God, Father of all Mercies, we thine "unworthy Servants do give thee most humble and "hearty Thanks for all Goodness & Loving-Kindness "to us, & to all Men. We bless thee for our CREA-"TION, PRESERVATION, and all the Blessings of this "Life; But above all, for thine inestimable Love, "in the REDEMPTION of the World, by our Lord "and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the Means of Grace, "and for the Hopes of Glory; and we beseech thee "give

(A) See the Sermon on Good-Friday, in this Work. Serm. XXIV.

" give us that due Senſe of all thy Mercies, that our
" Hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we
" may ſhew forth thy Praiſe not only with our Lips,
" but in our Lives; by giving up ourſelves to thy
" Service, & by walking before thee in Holineſs &
" Righteouſneſs all our Days, through Jeſus Chriſt
" our Lord: To whom with Thee, & the Holy Ghoſt,
" be all Honour and Glory, World without End.
" Amen."

Sermon

SERMON LXXV.

Salvation, indifferently offered to all Men: with the Danger of neglecting it.

Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect "so great Salvation?"

Being not only the CREATED (A) and PRESERVED, (B) but, (when we by Transgression fell,) the REDEEMED (C) of the Lord also, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?"

When the wise and eternal Councils of Heaven, concerning the Salvation of Mankind, were first declared to the World, by the Appearance & Preaching of Jesus Christ, nothing could more reasonably be expected than that the Dignity of his Person, the Authority of his Doctrine, and Excellency of his Life, should have perswaded Men to imitate so holy an Example. For,

If either the Worth of a Person, or the Importance of any Message, merited a kind and honourable Reception

(A) Sermon 67, 68. (B) Sermon 69, 70. (C) Sermon 71, 72, 73, 74.

ception among Men, it was certainly our Saviour, and the Errand he came upon. - If to give Mankind Aſſurance of a State of Life & Immortality, - to offer Pardon of Sin, and Reconciliation with God, on the moſt eaſy & reaſonable Terms; - If to reform a degenerate World from all Impurity, by a Doctrine, holy as its Author, were things becoming the Son of God to reveal, or the Sons of Men to receive, nothing could be more daringly wicked than that this Perſon ſhould be deſpiſed, his Authority ſlighted, and his Doctrine contemned. For,

The greater the Salvation was that this Kindneſs tendered to Men, and the more prevailing the Motives for embracing his Doctrine, the more exemplary and ſevere will the Puniſhment be on thoſe who reject it; nothing being more agreeable to thoſe eternal Laws of Juſtice, by which God governs the World, than that Puniſhment ſhould be in Proportion to the Mercy deſpiſed.

If, therefore, through too mean an Eſtimation of the Excellency of Chriſtianity, we reject — or thro' too great an Opinion of the Wiſdom of this World we ſlight, deſpiſe, and diſeſteem the Goſpel, as vain and uſeleſs; — If thro' too great a Love of the Pleaſure of Sin, or a ſecure careleſs Temper of Mind, we do not perform what Chriſtianity requires, to make

us happy, what Way can we find whereby to escape the Wrath and just Judgment of God? For,

If God was severe against the Violation of a far meaner Institution, (the Law of Moses, only,) "that every Contempt and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward," "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great, a much greater Salvation?"

In which Words are these four Particulars observable.

First, That there is a general Salvation by Christ offered to Sinners in the Gospel.

Secondly, That this is a great Salvation.

Thirdly, That, nevertheless, it is too commonly neglected. And then,

Lastly, The Danger of such as do Neglect it, for, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation.

First, I am to shew, that there is a general Salvation by Christ offered to Sinners in the Gospel.

Man, having fallen from his original Uprightness and Innocence in our first Parents, became thenceforth liable to Condemnation and Punishment; insomuch that all who partake of that Nature are subject to this Misery, "Being by Nature born in Sin,

and Children of Wrath." And, As we were born, ſo we muſt have continued, had not ſome Means been found out for our Eſcape, which is called, our Salvation. Now,

This Deliverance we have found in the Perſon of Chriſt, and in the Preaching of his Goſpel, which reſcues us from the Evils incurred, and reſtores us to the Happineſs that had been forfeited by the Fall. — Indeed,

God, by his Goſpel, hath taken ſo much Care of Man's Salvation, that nothing NOW, but our own Neglect, can poſſibly make us miſerable. Whatever is neceſſary to make Men happy in their preſent fallen and degenerate State, is abundantly provided-for by the Goſpel of Chriſt, which "affords us all things requiſite to Life and Godlineſs;" all things that can conduce to our Happineſs both here and hereafter. And,

This Salvation is GENERAL, — GOD, the great Creator, and righteous Governor, & merciful Judge of the Whole Earth, offers to all Men the gracious Terms and Poſſibilities of Salvation.

God ſpeaks to Men Originally, by the Light of Nature, by the Order and Proportions of Things, by the Voice of Reaſon, and by the Dictates of Conſcience. — It is every Man's Duty, and it is in every Man's

Men's Power, to hearken to this Voice of Reaſon and Conſcience; to this "Candle of the Lord," (as the Wiſe Man ſtiles it,) And concerning Them who do ſo, St. Paul declares, that, "having not the Law," (that is, having no revealed Law given them, yet,) "they are a Law unto themſelves." And by That Law, by the Law of Reaſon, of Nature and Conſcience, ſhall they finally be judged. For every Man is "accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." — This Light of Reaſon, is univerſal; the Firſt, and Great Gift of God; implanted in the Minds of all Men; acknowledged by the Conſcience, even of the Unrighteous themſelves; atteſted to by the neceſſary Judgment and Approbation even of the moſt abandoned and corrupt, in all Caſes wherein their own particular Intereſt is not concerned. — The acting contrary to This Light, by any profane, unjuſt, fraudulent, or corrupt Practices whatſoever, is in All perſons, under all Diſpenſations, the higheſt and moſt inexcuſable Fault; as being deſtructive of the very Foundation of all Religion. And the acting agreeably to it, is in all Perſons always acceptable to God; and, in Thoſe to whom no Light of Revelation hath been afforded, it is All that is required of them. For, "in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh

Righteouſneſs, is accepted of him." And afterwards,

When, thro' the growing Corruptions and Idolatry of many Ages, Cuſtom and Example and bad Education had almoſt univerſally extinguiſhed the natural Light of Conſcience; and cauſed Reaſon, That great Gift and Witneſs of God, to be almoſt totally neglected; God raiſed up the Patriarchs, both before and after the Flood, to be Preachers of Righteouſneſs to the World, to be as "Lights ſhining in a dark Place," to invite all Men to Repentance, to the Acknowledgment of the Truth and to the Practice of Virtue, in their ſeveral and reſpective Generations. After which, by the giving of the Law to the Iſraelites, he placed That People as a "City on a Hill," an eminent and ſtanding Witneſs to all the Nations around, calling them off from impious and abominable Idolatries to the Worſhip of the God of Heaven. And by a Succeſſion of Prophets for Many Ages, he declared continually to the whole People of the Jews, and by Them to all Others who were willing "to retain God in their Knowledge," & had not wholly given themſelves up to a reprobate Mind; he declared his Readineſs to accept That Repentance and Amendment of Sinners, which even the Light of Nature itſelf, if they had attended to it, would, in a great Degree, have led them to;

"God

"God having never left himself wholly without Witness in that he did Good, & gave Men Rain from Heaven, & fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness;" and their "own Consciences in the mean Time," according to their moral or immoral Behaviour, "accusing or else excusing one another." God, by a continual Succession of Prophets, declared (what the Light of Nature itself gave reasonable but obscurer Hopes of,) his Readiness to accept the Repentance & Amendment of Sinners, and to receive All Men to his Mercy, upon Their returning into the Way of Righteousness. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that he turn from his Way and live." And again, in Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters: And he that hath no Money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price." — And again, "Incline your Ear, and come unto me; hear, & your Soul shall live." — "I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of David." - Again "Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

By the Goſpel of his Son, God has ſtill more expreſsly and explicitly declared, and commanded to be preached to every Nation under Heaven, the merciful Offer of Salvation made unto All Mankind, upon the moſt reaſonable and neceſſary Terms of Faith and Repentance, That is, of ſincere renewed Obedience; - excluding None from this gracious Invitation; but commanding his Servants to go out into All Places, and to EXHORT Men, - to BESEECH them, - to URGE them, - to be INSTANT with them; nay, even to COMPEL them, (by the moſt kind and earneſt Intreaties, by the moſt affectionate and preſſing Importunities, "compel them,) to come in, that his Houſe may be filled." — Accordingly, "their Sound has gone forth into all the Earth, and their Words into the Ends of the World." And no Man, to whom this Doctrine has been preached, can ſay, that his Duty and the Way to Happineſs has not been clearly made known to him; unleſs he wilfully cloſes his Eyes, that he may not ſee; and his Ears, that he may not hear.

Our Saviour himſelf, who was in the Boſom of his Father, (and who knew perfectly, and was ſent by him on Purpoſe to reveal to us his Whole Will concerning the Salvation of Mankind;) thus teſtifies in the moſt expreſs Words: "God, (ſays he,) ſo

love

loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life;" and "that the World through him might be saved." He does not say, he was sent that a few particular Persons, but "that the World," if they would hearken to him, and be prevailed upon to return into the Ways of Righteousness, "thro' him might be saved." And accordingly when he set about this great Work for which he was sent, he applies himself to All Men without Reserve; "Come unto me All ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest;" And again, "If any Man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

In one Place, indeed, we find him affirming, that "he was not sent, save unto the lost Sheep of the House of Israel." But the Occasion, and Manner, of his affirming this; and his Treatment of the Person afterwards to whom he had said this; and the whole History & Tenour of Scripture, plainly shew, that his Meaning herein was not to affirm, that he was not sent to Others at all; but only that, in Order of Time, he was not sent to Others so soon, as to "the lost Sheep of the House of Israel." The Gospel was to be preached FIRST to the Jews; and our Lord was first to be the "Glory of God's People Israel:"

Israel:" But afterwards He was to be also a "Light to lighten the Gentiles," and to be their "Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth."

The Apostles themselves, at the Beginning, were under very strong Prejudices concerning this Matter: But they were convinc'd afterwards by frequent Admonitions from our Lord; And then they Fully and Clearly testified this Great Truth. "The Grace of God, (saith St. Paul,) which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to ALL Men," And "Who will have All Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth." St Peter in like manner, "The Lord, (saith he,) is not willing that Any should perish, but that All should come to Repentance:" To Repentance; That is, to a real and effectual Amendment and Reformation of Life; Which is Always the Meaning of Repentance in Scripture. (A)

Besides

(A) Some Writers have contended, that, in these several Texts, the Words, *All Men*, must be understood to signify only, *Some* of *All Sorts* of Men, - *Some* from among the *Jews*, - *Some* from among the *Gentiles*, - *Some* from among the *Rich*, - *Some* from among the *Poor*, &c. But, This Interpretation arises merely from a great Unskilfulness in Language. For tho the Words *All Men*, do indeed in Scripture, as in common Speech, signify very frequently, not *All* Men *absolutely*, but, in a limited Sense, *All* against whom no Exception is plainly understood; yet in no *Language*, according to *Any* common Manner of speaking, can they mean, *Some* only *out of every Sort of Men*; and consequently

Beſides the Places before-cited, This great and fundamental Truth is ſtill MORE CLEARLY, (if more clearly it can be,) expreſſed in the Revelations.

"I Jeſus have ſent mine Angel to teſtify unto you theſe things in the Churches: - - - And the Spirit and the Bride ſay, Come; And let him that heareth, ſay, Come: And let him that is athirſt, come; And whoſoever will," (i.e. whoſoever will lead a virtuous Life,) "let him take of the Water freely."

And, to add ſtill greater Weight to this ſolemn Declaration; God, even the FATHER himſelf in Perſon, is introduced as affirming the ſame thing from the Throne of his Glory. "And he that ſat upon the Throne, ſaid; - - theſe Words are true & faithful; - - - I will give unto him that is athirſt, of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely: He that overcometh," (i.e. who reſiſts the Temptations of a wicked & corrupt World,) "ſhall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son."

The Deſign of God, then, in the gracious Declarations of the Goſpel, is, to bring all Men, by the Promiſe

[a] *Scripture*, (which always expreſſes itſelf in the common Way,) the Words cannot poſſibly have *That Meaning*. But the Senſe plainly is, that God really and ſincerely intends the Salvation of *All Men*; and that it is for his *Own* Fault only, for *Wickedneſs* only, and *deliberate Unrighteouſneſs*, that *Any Man* ſhall be condemned.

Promiſe of Pardon, to Repentance and Amendment here, and thereby to eternal Happineſs hereafter.

But, A Difficulty ariſes here, and indeed very obviouſly, from comparing the actual Event of things with the foregoing Declarations of God's gracious Intention and Deſign in it.

If God deſigned, by the gracious Terms of the Goſpel, to bring all Men to Salvation; How comes the Extent of it to be confined within ſo narrow a Compaſs, and the Effect of it to be, in Experience, ſo inconſiderable, even where, in Profeſſion, it ſeems to have univerſally prevailed?

The Anſwer to this, is; That in all MORAL Matters, the Intention and Deſign of God, never ſignifies, (as it does always in NATURAL things,) an Intention of the Event, actually and neceſſarily to be accompliſhed; but, (which alone is conſiſtent with the Nature of MORAL things,) an Intention of the Means, neceſſary on God's Part, to the putting of that Event into the Power of the proper and immediate Agents. For Inſtance,

With Intention that all Men ſhould act REASONABLY, God indues them with the Faculty of Natural Reaſon. The Event, whether after This, they will act reaſonably or no, muſt depend upon their own Choice

Choice and Care: Becauſe the very Faculty or Power of acting reaſonably, does neceſſarily and eſſentially include in it a Power of acting likewiſe unreaſonably.

The Caſe is the very ſame, with Reſpect to the Method of bringing Men to Salvation by the Goſpel. God has commanded the Goſpel to be preached to the Whole World. The merciful Conditions, & the gracious Means and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel, are ſufficient to bring all Men to Salvation; except ſuch as either wilfully reject it, when fairly and reaſonably propoſed to them; or, who profeſſing to embrace it, yet obey it not. For, as for thoſe to whom it was either never at all; or, (which is much the ſame thing,) never reaſonably preached, their Caſe is exactly the ſame with Regard to the Goſpel, as the Caſe of ſuch others is with Regard to Natural Reaſon, who either totally, or in great Meaſure, want that Natural Faculty. Every Man will be "accepted according to That he hath, and not according to That he hath NOT."

"God, therefore, willeth all Men to be ſaved;" juſt in the ſame Manner as he willeth all Men to act rationally: and yet this doth not hinder them from deſtroying themſelves, by wilfully rejecting that Salvation. For, tho "the Grace of God has, indeed,

appeared unto all Men," and "is ſufficient" unto Salvation; yet it effects this no otherwiſe than by "teaching them," in a peculiar & emphatical Manner, "that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World." — This Offer, though graciouſly made to ALL, yet in Event becomes effectual to thoſe only, who are qualified & capable to receive it. — And,

h. That all which is propoſed, &c. - (under) - vation began at firſt to be ſpoken by our Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them Witneſs by Signs and Wonders following." And,

What greater Satisfaction could Men, in Reaſon, deſire? For, as it might juſtly have been expected that the Meſſenger of ſo great News to the World, ſhould be no mean, or ordinary Perſon, ſo neither was he: For,

No leſs than the eternal Son of God came down from the Boſom of his Father, to rectify the Miſtakes of Mankind, to ſhew them the Way to be happy, and to perſuade them to it by the moſt powerful Arguments, and fully to expiate for all their Offences and paſt Tranſgreſſions. — Indeed,

We find all the three Perſons in the ſacred Trinity engaged

engaged in the great Work of Man's Salvation: It "was first spoken by our Lord; God also bearing-witness, by divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy-Ghost." — So that not only the first Revelation, but the Testimony to confirm it, was from God. Surely never were Truths so clearly & fully attested as That of the Gospel.

From hence it follows, that the Foundation of our Faith is built on a divine Testimony.

If it should then at any time be asked, Why we believe that great Salvation which the Gospel offers? The Answer is, Because it was delivered by our Lord, who neither could, nor would deceive us.

If it be further required, How we know that this was delivered by our Lord? The Answer plainly is, Because this was the Doctrine of all his Disciples, and of all those who constantly heard and conversed with him. But,

Should it be again asked, How we can know that their Testimony was true, since they were Men of like Passions with ourselves, This is resolved by God himself, who "bore Witness by Signs and Wonders following; and by divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost;" which surely would not, in any imaginable Reason, have been granted to impostors to

appeared unto all Men," and "is ſufficient" unto Salvation; yet it effects this no otherwiſe than by "

That all which is propoſed in the Goſpel is TRUE, we may reſt aſſured; for God hath given us the greateſt Convictions poſſible, that theſe Offers came from himſelf; for ſo the Apoſtle informs us, "this Salvation began at firſt to be ſpoken by our Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them Witneſs by Signs and Wonders following." And,

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confirm Untruths, to the deceiving of Mankind. (A)

If theſe Arguments will not content & convince us, none will. — But,

"Who are we that we ſhould reply againſt God," nor think that ſufficient which God himſelf hath thought ſo? or queſtion the Certainty of what is atteſted by the Broad-Seal, (as it were,) of Heaven, and by God himſelf!

There is, then, a Salvation by Chriſt offered to Sinners in the Goſpel, & what this is, (i.e the Terms of it,) we are now briefly to explain.

That which God requires as a Condition, & which he will accept as a Qualification in thoſe who hope for eternal Life, is, "Faith in Chriſt," and a ſincere and univerſal Obedience to the Precepts of his holy Goſpel

(A) We believe the Jewiſh Religion, for this plain Reaſon, among others, becauſe the Chriſtian confirms it: and we believe the Chriſtian, chiefly upon the full Proof, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles have given of it. They who ſaw him, with their own Eyes, perform things which Man could not do; and heard him, with their own Ears, foretell things which Man could not fore-know, and yet experienced them to come to paſs; muſt be ſure that ſome Power attended him, more than human. — And ſince his Doctrines all promoted the ſpiritual Worſhip and Honour of the One true God, and Virtue and Happineſs among Men: They muſt be ſure alſo that This Power was not of an Evil Spirit, but of a Good One: and conſequently, that He came from God, and taught his Will. — Their Faith, therefore, was reaſonable, and Our's is ſo too.

Gospel. - "Christ is the Author of eternal Salvation to them that obey him;" or, (according to the original Greek,) "to them that hearken to him;" (i.e) to them who do so hear and believe his Gospel, as to obey it.

The Salvation, then, offered to us in the Gospel imports, a saving us from the Evil of Sin HERE, in Order to the delivering us from the Evil of Suffering HEREAFTER. — Indeed,

The Son of God assumed the Name of Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his People from their Sins; not only from the Punishment due, but also from the Power and Defilement of it.

He came to save us not IN, but FROM our Sins; "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works;" We being then saved, when we are made Saints of Sinners. Indeed, expressly, and to this very Purpose, was this Salvation sent us, that it might "teach us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World."

Salvation, then, not only imports our being saved from Punishment, but also from Sin, and from the Servitude of it: For,

It was not only Paradise but Innocence that Man-

kind loſt by the Fall; and therfore it is Purity as well as Eaſe we are again to regain.

As Salvation, then, imports a ſaving us from our Sins, in Order to our final Happineſs, let this rectify our Notion of it, and let us live according to it.

Let this alſo admoniſh us what Statutes and Ordinances are to be accounted SAVING. For,

Seeing that Salvation is, primarily, a Deliverance from our Sins, then, only thoſe Ordinances are ſaving, which tend to our Sanctification; and whereby we are prevailed upon to "ceaſe to do Evil, and learn to do well;" - "Doctrines which are according to Godlineſs." For the End and Excellency of all Religion is to ſuppreſs Vice, and to promote Virtue. (A) Again,

Let us alſo bereby examine and try our own State; and herein this one plain Rule is ſufficient and fitted to every Capacity.

For there is no Man, (if he will only reflect on his own Heart,) but can tell, whether or no he ye love

(A) Whatever Doctrines or Opinions tend not to Godlineſs, b tend to weaken our Obligations to Piety, theſe we may be ſure are n the genuine Doctrines of Chriſt, who himſelf came to "fulfil all Righ teouſneſs, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of goo Works."

love his Sins too well to part with them; who cannot live wilfully in any known Sin, and be at the same Time, in a State of Grace and Favour, and of Salvation; which is a Deliverance from all Sin. (A)

Again, Let this once more instruct us in the Exercise of mutual Charity, and true Christian Beneficence. — For,

Seeing that Salvation is Man's ultimate Felicity, to promote it, is the greatest Charity; which also consisting in a Deliverance from Sin, can be no otherwise done, than by opposing Sin, and encouraging Holiness. — In all our Conversation, therefore, (in Order to express that Charity we are indebted in to one another,) how careful ought we to be of ever giving any Countenance to Sin, and of taking all Opportunities we possibly can to dissuade others from it. How

(A) Tho' all Men are Sinners; yet all Men are not Sinners alike: for the Regenerate do not sin after the Similitude of the Wicked; and may therefore be distinguished One from the Other by these 4 Marks.

1st. Good Men do abstain from great Sins, such as Blasphemy, Injustice, the Crimes of Impurity, &c.

2dly. They do not sin out of Malice, and with Deliberation, as the Wicked do; but by Ignorance, or by Surprise.

3dly. When they sin, they soon recover themselves by Repentance, and correct their Ways; whereas the Wicked are not at all troubled, nor amend their Lives, when they have sinned.

4thly. Good Men avoid Habitual Sins, and labour to overcome them, which the Wicked do not. Serm. LXXV.

How little of the Chriſtian Temper and Charity hath he, then, who can with Unconcernedneſs, indeed, with Pleaſure, not only "ſuffer Sin to reſt upon his Brother," but even add to his Burden, by wicked Enticements and more vile Allurements! "Chriſt died to ſave Sinners, but ſuch live to make Men ſeven Times more ſo." So that, in the very ſame Senſe that he was a Saviour, to ſave his People from their Sins; they are, - (we care not to ſay it,) Would they but conſider, what it is to ſeduce others from their Duty to Damnation!

Surely, therefore, it highly concerns us all, in our ſeveral Stations, to endeavour as much as we can a Reformation; - firmly to oppoſe Vice, and heartily to encourage Virtue: And, to this End, let us ſtrive againſt OUR OWN Sins, to forſake and reform them; and oppoſe OTHER Men's Sins, by our kind Perſuaſions, and good Examples. For,

This is to be kind indeed, — This is the only true Chriſtian Catholic Temper, the divine Love; that, as it deſcends from Heaven, ſo will it alſo lead thither — the which, if we duly purſue and perform, will not only bring us thither, but will alſo enlarge our Share of Inheritance in it.

Sermon

SERMON LXXVI.

On the same Subject.

Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape, if we neglect "so great Salvation?"

Having already shown, from these Words, that there is a general Salvation, by Christ, offered to Sinners in the Gospel, & subjoined a few Improvements resulting from it, I am to shew,

Secondly, That the Salvation offered is great; the Greatness of which the Apostle hath here expressed emphatically, with a Mark of Admiration; "So great Salvation!" So great! as wondering at its Greatness, as being the most excellent and wonderful Deliverance, exceeding all that were before it, and such, as never after it will be any like it. Not like that of Moses, Joshua, or Gideon, delivering out of bodily Slavery, to temporary Possessions, and worldly Grandeur; though these were great Salvations, and as such commemorated in the Old Testament; but infinitely greater, and more desireable,

as

as will appear which Way ſoever we conſider it; — Whether in the Evils it ſaves from: — The Bleſſings it procures: — From Whom it is derived: — For Whom it is intended: — The Price it coſt: — The Manner of its Contrivance; — Or, Laſtly, The Powerfulneſs of its Effects.

First, It is a GREAT Salvation, with Reſpect to the Evils it ſaveth from — which is Sin, with all its dire Conſequences of Diſgrace, Judgment, and Torment, both in this, and the World to come.

A greater Salvation than which, fallen Man is neither capable of, nor needs: For, it is only Sin, that is both Evil in itſelf, and the Cauſe of all Evil unto us.

We need, therefore, Deliverance from no other Evil, being in This One, at once delivered from the Miſchief of all Evils. But,

Secondly, It is alſo a great Salvation, with Reſpect to the Bleſſings to be obtained by it. — For,

A Deliverance from Guilt, implies our being reſtored to Favour, and to the Enjoyment of all that is good and fit for us here at preſent, and the Aſſurance of all that hath been promiſed for our Reward hereafter: "Such things as Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor have entered into the Heart of Man

to conceive, an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, & that fadeth not away:" "An everlaſting Conſolation:" "A Crown of Glory, reſerved in Heaven for us:" "An exceeding and an eternal Weight of Glory;" infinitely ſurpaſſing both the Weight of our Care and Pains for it, and the Reach of our preſent Imaginations of it. But,

Thirdly, It appears alſo great, with Reſpect to its Author, from whom it is derived.

The Dignity of the Donor imparts a Value to every Gift: And,

How great, then, ought This Salvation to be eſteemed by us, when coming NOT from any Fellow-Creature, or Angel, though of the higheſt Rank and Order, but immediately from Chriſt the Son of God, who is "God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, God over all, bleſſed for ever;" whoſe excellent Glory and Majeſty exceed all things in Heaven & in Earth. (A)

But, Fourthly, It is great, with Reſpect to Us, for

(A) The Dignity of the Perſon, by whoſe Interpoſition any Favour is procured, & by whom it is tranſmitted, ſhows both the Greatneſs and Importance of the Thing itſelf, and the Love and Condeſcenſion of the Original Author of it; And the neglecting it in this Caſe, implies not only Folly, Inſolence, and Rebellion, but moreover, the greateſt Obſtinacy alſo, which no Authority can prevail over; and the higheſt Ingratitude, which no Kindneſs or Condeſcenſion can overcome: Which, therefore, whoſoever is guilty of, muſt be confeſſed moſt juſt, to deſerve the ſevereſt of Puniſhments. Serm. LXXVI.

for whom it is intended: It being not only appropriated to Man, but extended to ALL Mankind. A great Salvation it is, being offer'd to Man rather than Angels, who were Creatures of a ſuperior Order, of a more ſpiritual Nature, perhaps not more offenſive, and who no leſs needed, and might have made a better Return.

But they, in their lapſed State, are paſſed by; and ſinful, deluded, helpleſs Man, without Deſert, - without Deſire, - and beyond Expectation, was remembered, viſited, and effectually relieved! Truly great, then, was it for ſuch a Creature, - in ſuch Circumſtances, - and by ſuch a Perſon, to be ſaved! Angels rejected, and Man regarded! And that, not only One or Two of the moſt rare and eminent, but the whole Race of Mankind; to which all have an equal Claim upon the ſame Terms.

They, therefore, do greatly err who leſſen this Salvation, in this Reſpect, and would reſtrain to a certain Number, what is generouſly offered to all; and from which none are excluded, but, thoſe only, who by wilful Obſtinacy, Diſobedience, and final Impenitence exclude themſelves. — But further,

The Salvation offered us is moreover great, with Reſpect to the Price it coſt. For,

"We were redeemed, not with Nothing, neither with

(*) We find among the Fathers, who have ventured to ſearch after an Account of ſo wonderful a Diſpenſation, ſeveral Reaſons or Inducements why God rather had Compaſſion on us than thoſe heavenly Spirits that fell; I ſhall mention, and but juſt mention, two the moſt plauſible and ſatisfactory.

The Firſt is that of St. Auſtin, that Man's Caſe was more to be pitied than theirs, becauſe Man was by them tempted, and deceived by the Malice of their Chief; but the Angels had no Tempter, nor but themſelves, their own Pride and Ambition, to ſeduce them to their Apoſtacy. There was nothing of Ignorance or Deceit to leſſen the Voluntarineſs of their Sin; they fell in the Light of Heaven, and rendered themſelves incapable of Pity. But Man, as he fell by the Devil's Malice, was the future Object of God's Mercy; and accordingly, as he was undone by another's Wickedneſs, he was recovered by another's Merit.

The ſecond is, that when the Angels rebelled, tho' ſome fell and others ſtood, each of them ſinned, and ſuffered only for himſelf; and conſequently, as their whole Nature was not involved in Guilt, ſo their Miſery was not univerſal. But in the Caſe of Man, that ſingle Act of Diſobedience

with ſuch corruptible things as Silver and Gold:" Seeing that what all the World was worth, fell infinitely ſhort of the Terms it was held at, "ſo that we muſt have let That alone for ever;" yea, though there had been "offered a thouſand of Rams, or ten thouſand Rivers of Oyl, or even the Fruit of our Body had been given for the Sin of our Soul."

Nothing leſs, or other, than the Incarnation and Sufferings, and Death of the Son of God could come up to its Value! Who left his Throne, obſcured his Majeſty, lived an humble and contemptible Life, and died a ſhameful and painful Death, "for us Men, and for our Salvation." And, ſeeing that the Worth and Excellency of a thing is uſually meaſured by the Greatneſs of its Price; How great then is this Salvation which could not be had upon eaſier or other Terms! — Again,

It is yet further great, with Reſpect to the Manner of its Contrivance, which was in no eaſy or ordinary, but in the moſt aſtoniſhing Method, and by the moſt difficult Means to be brought about; ſeeing that in Order hereto, Sin was to be fully ſatisfied for to the offended Juſtice of God, which was beyond the Power of any Creature to effect, it being Man whole Sin it was.

Here, therefore, were Two of the moſt aſtoniſhing

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ing all of them virtually and federally in Adam, and conſequently the Decree of Death paſſed upon all Mankind, in him concluded under the common Condemnation. And ſhould God's Creation be thus deſtroyed, & his Goodneſs defeated, by the Malice of the Devil? "Haſt Thou made all Men for Nought?" ſays the Pſalmiſt. That cannot be; ſo great Wiſdom cannot do ſo great a Work in vain: but in vain it had been if God had not ſhewn Mercy; and therefore was Man's Caſe, rather than that of the fallen Angels, Matter of the divine Compaſſion and Pity.

Thus they reaſoned, and perhaps not amiſs; but it will better become us humbly to adore the plain Revelation of his Love, than curiouſly to pry into the hidden Secrets of his Wiſdom, to aſcribe all this to "the tender Mercies of our God, whereby He from on High hath viſited us; to the great Love wherewith He loved us," as the Apoſtle ſpeaks. "God ſo loved the World, (ſays our Saviour,) that He gave his only-begotten Son;" and we, taught by Him, for a Reaſon of this great Myſtery, ſay only, "even ſo, Lord, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."

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Wonders contrived and effected for this Salvation, far out-doing God's almighty Work of Creation; even God's becoming Man by an Union of Two of the moſt diſtant Natures, and his humbling himſelf therein to become "obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs." Here "Truth and Juſtice met together; here Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other." — But,

Laſtly, It may alſo be called great, with Reſpect to the Powerfulneſs of its Effect. For,

To be ſaved from Sin, and to be preſerved by the mighty Power of God, thro' Faith, unto Salvation, in Obedience unto Life eternal, in the preſent State of Corruption and Tryal, is a Work of great Power, equalled by St. Paul, "to even the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead."

For this, nothing but an Almighty Power can effect, either of Sinners to make Saints, or to preſerve them ſo unto the End.

So powerfully are we ſaved: - With ſuch a mighty Hand doth Salvation by Chriſt reſcue from Sin, and preſerve in a State of Grace, even to a State of Glory; that "the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth Violence, & the Violent take it by Force." Therefore

Laying all theſe Conſiderations together; - re-

flecting

flecting on the great Evils we are hereby ſaved from; - the Happineſs we are advanced to; - the Author of our Salvation; - the Benefit to us by it; - the Price it coſt; - the Wonder by which it was wrought; - and the Power it was accompanied with, to ſave us: Conſidering all This, can we otherwiſe than, (with our Apoſtle,) in Admiration, acknowledge it to be "ſo great Salvation." Every Way complete, beautiful, and aſtoniſhing; beyond Parallel, - beyond Expreſſion, - and beyond Conception;

And, if ſo, then let us apply it to the following Purpoſes.

First, Of Caution: not to ſlight ſo great Salvation: becauſe great Matters treated as Trifles, is an intollerable Abuſe. - Small Matters may be excuſably neglected; But Salvation is too great to bear any Diſregard, & to which our Concern ought to be in ſome Meaſure proportionable: For, "How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation?" But,

Secondly, Let this keep us always humble, under a due Senſe of the Obligations hereby laid upon us, who are certainly, by ſo great Salvation, the moſt obliged, and conſequently bound to make all poſſible Returns: and after all, to confeſs ourſelves to be but "unprofitable Servants;" having only to boaſt

of what God in all things hath done for us. - Again,

Thirdly, Let the Greatneſs of our Salvation excite us to an Eſteem and Zeal for the Goſpel of Chriſt, becauſe by it are conveyed to us "the glad Tidings" hereof, which ſurely, for its Meſſage-Sake, ought to be ever dear unto us! For,

How miſerable is the Condition of them who yet want it, while "they ſit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death;" and, (for ought we know, or for any thing revealed to the contrary,) will be likely to "periſh everlaſtingly in utter Darkneſs;" ſeeing "there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we can be ſaved."

How many great and mighty Nations are there, from whom this ineſtimable Mercy is with-held, while we are bleſſed, even to a Satiety, with it; who deſerve it as little, & are, (it is to be feared,) as little the better for it! When, inſtead of being ſaved by it, we have, for the moſt Part, only aggravated our own Damnation.

How great a Mercy, then, is it, that we have the free Enjoyment of it yet among us; whereby alone we are diſtinguiſhed from the moſt forlorn and heatheniſh People in the World! — How ought we, therefore, to value it, and to improve by it, - by hearkening to its Meſſage, - ſubmitting to its Guid-

ance

ance, – walking by its Light, – conſulting its Counſels, – familiarizing ourſelves with it, and delighting therein! But, alas!

Inſtead of This, how often do we find Men, otherwiſe of a good Underſtanding, of a quick and deep Apprehenſion; yet how dull and unaffected commonly are they about the important Matters of their Salvation; to which they hearken without Concern, and diſregard, even with Pleaſure! The Greatneſs of Salvation weighs light with them, being but as an empty Relation of an idle Story, which may in ſome Sort amuſe, but cannot profit.

To Conclude this Head: – Let what hath been ſaid make us all duly ſenſible of the Greatneſs of the Loſs, ſhould we at laſt fall-ſhort of it; which, (whatever we may now think of it,) cannot but be to our unſpeakable Detriment, which will be ſure to be bewailed, but can never be repaired.

Let us, then, think it too great to be neglected, and great enough to recompence our utmoſt Care and Pains to eſcape the Hazard of it.

The Sum of all is, that under this Senſe, and with this View, we ſhould "work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling;" Fearing to miſs it, and trembling at the Hazards we are under of ſo evil a Threatening; and in the Name, and through the

Aſſiſtance of God, working our Way through whatever Difficulties and Diſcouragements we may at any Time meet with, as becometh thoſe who obey the higheſt Authority, - in Purſuit of the moſt weighty Concern, - with all the Powers of Nature and Grace; "giving all Diligence to flee from the Wrath to come," and to "make our Calling and Election ſure;" "that ſo an Entrance may be adminiſtered to us abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of God."

Having thus laid before you the two firſt Particulars that were propoſed; and ſubjoined ſuch Reflections under each as appeared neceſſary, and aſ flowed from the ſame, I ſhall proceed to ſhew,

Thirdly, That this Salvation, though ſo great, is yet too commonly neglected.

This is the Suppoſition upon which the Diſſuaſion in the Text is grounded: "If ye neglect;" implying that it is not only poſſible, but probable.

That I may illuſtrate This to the greater Profit I ſhall,

Firſt, Explain the Nature of the Sin here condemned. And then,

Secondly, The Qualifications neceſſary to receiv th

the Terms of Salvation, with the opposite Qualities, or chief Hindrances which generally prevent it: warning against the Reasons and Occasions of them.

Concluding, with pointing out the Duties here particularly incumbent on us. — And,

First, The Nature of the Sin here condemned will be best explained, by observing, that as it is a bare Neglect, so it is not every Kind of Neglect which is here meant.

A bare Neglect is a Sin short of a direct Opposition to, or of an actual Renunciation of Salvation by Christ, of which Men are generally aware, it being so confessedly heinous; and are therefore, not so easily and soon seduced to it; for there are but few that ever arrive to such a Degree of Obduracy, as openly to renounce their Salvation, or designedly to resolve and act against it. Whereas,

Multitudes, we see, there are who will do little or nothing of what they ought, or might do for it.

Too many, we may observe, there are who trust that they are good enough, because Others are worse, and who presume to be excused from doing more, because they do some little of what they ought to do. Now,

This is the very Sin, under the Apostle's Correc-

tion in the Text, condemning not so much Men's open and bold Defiance of Salvation, (which stands foremost in the Rank and Catalogue of Offences,) as their supine Carelessness, and indolent Neglect of it; in Order to excite all Men to make it their principal Business, as it is their principal Interest, to be saved. (*) Which brings me,

Secondly, To show wherein consists The excellent Temper and Disposition of Mind which qualifies Men to receive effectually, and to embrace stedfastly the Terms of Salvation proposed to them; And in What Particulars This Disposition principally shows itself.

The first Instance wherein this Good Disposition shows itself, is, Attentiveness or Consideration.

Without Attention and Consideration, a Man's Mind is in the same State with Regard to religious Knowledge, as it would be with Regard to the Knowledge of things in the World, had his Sense been forever defective. God has given us Faculties of the Mind to understand, just as he has given us Senses in the Body to perceive. Neither the One nor the Other are of any Use, unless applied by attending to their proper Objects.

Moses, when he had delivered to the Israelites the

(*) If it were a Matter of no Consequence, as Men seem frequently, by their Way and Manner of Life to think, whether they be saved or not; God would never have sent his Son into the World for us, to teach and to preach the Truth to us, and at last to be a Sacrifice for us: we cannot suppose it consistent with the Wisdom of God, that he should employ all these Methods and Miracles of his Love to save Sinners, if it did not much concern them whether they took Care

the Moral Part of the Law; "See," saith he, (that is, Observe and Attend,) "I have set before thee this Day Life and Good, Death and Evil." Duly A-

tedly. A second Particular, wherein this excellent Disposition of Mind shows itself, (and which is the natural Consequence of Attention and Consideration,) is a Delight in examining into Truth & Right; a taking Pleasure at all Times in beholding the Light, and in hearing the Voice of Reason.

Among ignorant & superstitious Men, Nothing is more neglected than Reason; that great Gift of God, That bright and singular Ornament of our Nature, which distinguishes us on the one Hand, from irrational Natures; & on the Other, from such as are unreasonable and perverse; evil Men, and "spiritual Wickedness in high Places." But,

How far soever this Gift of Reason may be neglected by corrupt Minds; yet, (as Solomon elegantly expresses it,) it is "the Candle of the Lord, searching all the inward Parts of the Belly." Nor is there any severer Punishment in this Life threatned anywhere in Scripture, than God's taking away Men's Reason & Understanding from them; "The Light of the Wicked shall be put out, and the Spark of his Fire shall not shine." - "The Light shall be dark in his Tabernacle, and his Candle shall be put

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Secondly, To ſhow wherein conſiſts The excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind which qualifies Men to receive effectually, and to embrace ſtedfaſtly the Terms of Salvation propoſed to them; And in What Particulars This Diſpoſition principally ſhows itſelf.

The firſt Inſtance wherein this Good Diſpoſition ſhows itſelf, is, Attentiveneſs or Conſideration.

Without Attention and Conſideration, a Man's Mind is in the ſame State with Regard to religious Knowledge, as it would be with Regard to the Knowledge of things in the World, had his Senſes been forever defective. God has given us Faculties of the Mind to underſtand, juſt as he has given us Senſes in the Body to perceive. Neither the One

(*) themſelves to be ſaved. For, would the All-wiſe God uſe ſo many ſtrong and perſuaſive Arguments to draw Men to a needleſs thing, ought we not rather to conclude, on the other Hand, that the Care of our Souls is the One thing needful? becauſe it is ſo in the Judgment of Him, who beſt knows the Worth of them, and the Conſequences of ſaving or loſing them forever.

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zeal. A ſecond Particular, wherein this excellent Diſpoſition of Mind ſhows itſelf, (and which is the natural Conſequence of Attention and Conſideration,) is a Delight in examining into Truth & Right; a taking Pleaſure at all Times in beholding the Light, and in hearing the Voice of Reaſon.

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out with him." — To This Light God requires us to attend; and They who do so, are acceptable to him. And he appeals to Men to judge by it even concerning his own Proceedings with them: - "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:" "Judge, I pray you, betwixt Me & my Vineyard." Which Appeal of God to the Reason of Mankind for the Equity of his Dealings with them, is alluded to in That Passage of the Psalmist, cited by St. Paul, "That thou mightest be justified in thy Sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Now, If we are required to judge in this Manner concerning God's Dealings with Us; much more must it needs be criminal in us, to neglect to make use of this Light in judging what we are to do ourselves. Our Saviour reproves the Jews, "Why even of yourselves, (saith he,) judge ye not what is right?" - And St. Paul speaks in like Manner to Christians, "Judge in yourselves, is it comely?" and again, "I speak as to wise Men," that is, to reasonable and intelligent Persons; "judge ye what I say." — Men are always in Scripture supposed to have an Ear; and they are commanded to hear, and to consider: To "call no Man Master upon Earth," but themselves to "prove all things, and to "try the Spirits whether they be of God;

to satisfy their Own Minds; And to be able also to give Satisfaction to Others, who at any Time" ask them a Reason of the Hope that is in them."

In the great and weighty Matters of Religion, the forming of This Judgement is not a Business of Skill, of Parts and Learning; but of Integrity and Simplicity of Mind. Which, whosoever is indued with, though otherwise of narrow Abilities, will judge better concerning any religious and moral Truth; than the most learned Philosopher in the World. But if this Simplicity of Judgment, this natural Eye and Guide of the Mind, be itself corrupted and depraved by Vice or Superstition, no Wonder if Men fall into endless and inextricable Errors. Our Saviour excellently represents this to us, "The Light of the Body is the Eye: If, therefore, thine Eye be single, they whole Body shall be full of Light: But if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body shall be full of Darkness: If, therefore, the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is That Darkness!" The Mind of a Man, whose moral Judgement is thus vitiated by departing from the Guidance of Reason and from The Love of Truth, is, (in the spiritual Sense,) "a Land of Darkness, as Darkness itself, & of the Shadow of Death, without any Order, and where the Light is as Darkness." Therefore,

3dly, The Third and Principal Particular, where-in conſiſts that excellent Temper and Diſpoſition of Spirit which fits and qualifies Men to embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation, is Moral Probity, Sincerity, and Integrity of Mind. "If any Man will do his Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God," - "If thou deſire Wiſdom, keep the Commandments, and the Lord ſhall give her unto thee; For he that keepeth the Law of the Lord, getteth the Underſtanding thereof;" This is what our Saviour, in his Parable, calls the Good Ground, which brings forth ſome ſixty and ſome an hundred Fold. Theſe are the Perſons which our Lord calls his "Sheep; which hear & know his Voice." Theſe are they, of whom we read that they are "ordained," or, (as the Greek ſignifies,) prepared and ſet in Order "to" receive the Means of "eternal Life." Theſe are they to whom it is promiſed, that "the Wiſe ſhall underſtand;" that "the Meek, God will guide in Judgment; and ſuch as are gentle, Them he will teach his Way." Of This Kind are All Thoſe, who "come unto Chriſt, becauſe the Father draws them;" (i.e) who through the Love of God, through the Love of Righteouſneſs and true Virtue, are led to believe and embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt.

The fourth, and last Inſtance, in which this good Diſpoſition I am ſpeaking of, ſhows itſelf, is a Readineſs to hearken to the Voice of Reaſon.

A well-diſpoſed Mind preſently feels the Goodneſs, and is ſtruck with a Senſe of the Beauty and Excellency, and acknowledges the Agreeableneſs of the Doctrine of Chriſt, to the eternal Truths of Nature. And this real Harmony of Reaſon and Revelation, (not an Enthuſiaſtick Fancy,) is the true internal Evidence of Scripture; is "God's Spirit bearing Witneſs with Our's." "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, that thou mayeſt do it." It is in a Manner, almoſt connatural to a reaſonable and well-diſpoſed Mind. "The Sound" of the Apoſtles' Preaching, ſaith he again, (what, by the Pſalmiſt was ſpoken concerning the Motion of the Stars of Heaven,) "Their Sound, (ſays he,) is gone forth into all Lands, and their Words unto the Ends of the World." – "He that hath Ears to hear," cannot but hear their Doctrine; He that has Eyes to ſee, even though he "runs, may read" it; He that has Underſtanding and Probity of Mind to apprehend, cannot but embrace it, when propoſed to him fairly and uncorruptly.

As the regular Motions of the Stars in the Heavens, are an undeniable Proof of the Power and

Wiſdom of God, and of the conſequent Obligations of Natural Religion; ſo the Doctrine of the Goſpel carries along with it, to reaſonable Minds, by its intrinſick Excellency, bright Evidences of Divine Truth in what it reveals. Chriſt is "come a Light into the World," And the Goſpel is the "Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhining in our Hearts," as conſpicuouſly in the moral Senſe, as in the natural Senſe God originally, at the Creation of the World, cauſed the "Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs." Again,

Our Saviour himſelf uſes the ſame Similitude. "The Kingdom of God, (ſays he,) is within you:" And, "if they ſhall ſay to you, See here, or See there, go not after them, nor follow them: For as the Lightning that lightneth out of the one Part under Heaven, ſhineth unto the other Part under Heaven; ſo ſhall alſo the Son of Man be in his Day." The univerſal Light of revealed Truth is to be found by all Men, not by following This or the Other particular Man or Body of Men, as a Guide; which is the very thing our Lord forbids in the Paſſage now cited: But 'tis to be found only by attending to the Revelation itſelf: According to our Saviour's Direction, "Search the Scriptures;" And after the Example of Thoſe, whom we find particularly commended

mended, for "searching the Scriptures daily, whether the things that were taught them, were so" or not: The Consequence of which, was, that they "received the Word," (so the Text expresses it,) "with all Readiness of Mind."

These are the principal Particulars, wherein consists that excellent Temper and Disposition of Mind, which qualifies and makes Men capable to receive and embrace effectually the Terms of Salvation.

The opposite Qualities, or chief Hindrances, which generally prevent the Offers of Salvation from being effectually embraced, &c, will be the Subject of our next.

Sermon

SERMON LXXVII.

On the ſame Subject.

Heb. ii. 3. "How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect "ſo great Salvation?"

That there is a Salvation by Chriſt in the Goſpel indifferently offered to all Men, has been already ſhewn; And alſo That this, tho ſo great Salvation, is yet too commonly neglected. The Qualifications alſo neceſſary to our receiving the Terms of Salvation, with the Means of improving them, have been pointed out: The Marks, the Reaſons & Occaſions of this Neglect, come now to be conſidered.

Firſt, The firſt Mark of Man's Neglect, is, his Inconvincibleneſs; when both Inſtruction, Reproof, and Perſuaſion are loſt upon him, and he "refuſeth "to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he ever ſo "wiſely." But,

Peradventure, ſhould ſome Word of Exhortation at any Time reach his obdurate Heart, too powerful to be ſlighted, and ſtrong enough to convict; yet

Man

Man's Neglect in this Matter, further appears,

Secondly, By his Delay to resolve for Amendment. No one can assign a better or any other Reason why he doth not immediately do his Duty, than only, because he is negligent, and cares not to do it at all; or, at least, not so long as he can avoid it.

And, indeed, having immediately resolved, (which is no uncommon thing,) upon some sudden Conviction; yet,

Man's Neglect may be further manifested by his cold and slow Progress in the Paths of Religion.

For, It is only Concern that makes active, and Care that gains Success in our Undertakings. When therefore, we see Men, so slow and languid, can we otherwise than conclude their Want of both Concern and Care? — But,

What alone will suffice to prove this, is, Their greater Concern for the things of this World. For, Who is there that doth not ordinarily show more Care, and Pains, & Diligence in his Temporal, than in his Spiritual Affairs? which yet none can without a blameable Neglect, because of their infinitely less Moment and Value.

Salvation is our great Concern, and which therefore ought to be regarded most: To mind any thing more, is to regard this too little; it being too

great & important to admit of a Rival in any thing.

But, because this may seem somewhat hard to Flesh and Blood, wherein we live by Sense, and are delighted with present Enjoyments, therefore we add another Manifestation of this: [viz]

Man's general Dislike of the Gospel-Terms and Conditions of obtaining Salvation; they endeavour, not so much to bring their Lives up to them, as to bring down, & level them to their Practices. They are unwilling to part with some beloved Vice or darling Lust, or to submit to the Severity of some Christian Duties; and yet presume, notwithstanding, to obtain their Salvation upon other and easier Terms, than what are required in the Gospel. But,

It is not for Man to chuse for himself, because the Terms are God's, and the Means are settled, to be neither altered nor abated, for the Pleasure of Man, or for the Sake of Sin. But,

Lastly, This is no less evidenced by Men's not making it so sure to themselves as they might. For,

Tho all would be saved, yet most are afraid of doing more than what may barely serve their Turn for it; but this is "an evil Covetousness," sincerely to be repented of. If Men can but escape future Misery, it is all they desire; few being ambitious of a Place in Abraham's Bosom, so they do not come into Dives' State of Torments.

Of Things of this World how solicitous are we; and of which the more we have, the more we desire, being "wiser in our Generation than the Children of Light." (a)

To what a Certainty have Men reduced all the Ways and Arts of Gain, of obtaining Pleasure, and of rising to Honour and Preferment, and how subtile are they in them? But,

In the Concernments of our Souls, & the Affairs of another World, how dull and injudicious! as if we were "wise only to do Evil; but to do Good, had no Understanding." By

(A) The great Providence and Application, the Earnestness of Thought and Care, which "the Children of this World" take, to secure their uncertain Advantages, is a just Reproach to the Inconsideration and Remissness, which "the Children of Light," (who make it their Profession and Principle, to secure the everlasting Advantages of another World,) are observed to be guilty of, in the Management of it. In whatever Light we view their opposite Characters, how abundantly more provident is the worldly wise Man, than he whose "Hope is in Heaven!" As to the former, whatever They delight in, how ardently do they pursue it, till they attain it, whether it be Riches, or Honours, or Pleasure! But it is rare to see the whole Life and Actions of a good Man, so constantly and uniformly conspiring to the furtherance of his great Design, so directly tending to the Salvation of his Soul, and the Increase of his Glory and Happiness in another World, as the Actions of a worldly Man, and the whole Course of his Life, do, to the advancing of his worldly Interests; for, He seldom doth any thing, that, to the best of his Knowledge, hinders it, much less, that is contrary to it: whereas good Men are but too often unmindful of their End, and of the Means to it, and, thro' Temptations, but too often led contrary to it. Serm. LXXVII.

By what incongruous and irregular Means do we ſeek to acquire ſound Piety and true Devotion, by maintaining only "a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power of it;" and in making Religion to conſiſt merely in Opinions and Niceties of Speculation, without a Practice conformable to it; like the Phariſees, of old Time, who "tythed Mint, Annice & Cummin" to Exactneſs, but omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, "Juſtice, Judgment, and Mercy." — And,

As in the Means, ſo alſo in the Uſe of them, are we more diligent. - "We riſe early, & late take Reſt and eat the Bread of Carefulneſs." Our Thoughts are continually intent upon our Concern, and obſerve every Opportunity to improve it. we do not counterfeit a Diligence, but rather conceal our Covetouſneſs and Ambition, and would not ſeem to be ſo ſerious and induſtrious in aſpiring after Riches & Honours, as, in Fact, we really are. — In the Purſuit of earthly things we are invincibly conſtant; neither bribed by Flattery, nor terrified by Frowns, nor daunted by Difficulties; but rather quickened by them. Whereas, in our eternal Concerns, how cold, and languid are we? not to ſay, hypocritical in the Service we perform. How faintly do we reſiſt Sin, and weakly encounter Temptation? and

how

how often, and how easily are we baffled by them? not being able so be "hated," much less "persecuted:" scarce even to have any "Manner of Evil spoken against us for Righteousness' Sake:", checked by the Apprehension of Dangers, and by our fearful Imaginations even make them greater than they are; and, with the People of Israel, disheartened from all further Attempts of entering into "the promised Land, because it is full of Giants, and the Sons of Anak," of Difficulties and Dangers, (in Imagination,) hard to be overcome.

Thus do we make all things stoop to the things of this World, to the Neglect of things eternal. We are true to our Design, & pay it all possible Respect, by suffering nothing to take-place of it in our Esteem and Endeavour. We do not seek Riches, as if we sought them not; nor enjoy the present World, as if we possessed it not; "tho the Fashion of this World passeth away:" but we seek Heaven, as if we sought it not; and the things therein, as if we regarded them not, tho the Fashion of that World passeth not away. — And!

What a Reproach is this to us, that we should be wiser for the Concernments of a short and inconsiderable Time, than for all Eternity; — that we should be more prudent and skilful in the Contrivance and

Management of our little Affairs, and more resolute and strenuous in the Prosecution of them, than we are about the everlasting Concernments of our Souls! - that we should toil and take more Pains for the deceitful Riches, than for the true: and be contented to hazard more for a corruptible Crown, than for an incorruptible; - that we should love Pleasure, more than we do God; and mind our Bodies and things temporal, more than we do our Souls, and eternal Happiness!

We are all of us ambitious to ape, if not exceed our Superiors in Wealth and Vanity; but can give them contentedly, at all Times, the Preference in Virtue, and let them practice it without Emulation. Now,

To be so soon, and so easily satisfied in Goodness, and to be careless and indifferent about it, must necessarily argue a very culpable Neglect. (A)

In Order, therefore, to excite our Zeal in the Service of God, and the Care of our Souls, we should consider the Excellency of the Divine Nature, and the infinite Bounty & Goodness of God towards us. The wonderful Condescension of the Son of God; who stooped so low to redeem us, and suffered so much to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous

(A) A Man may be too just, and too wise; but never too good

of good Works;" - The great Importance of working out our Salvation, and the Necessity of striving, if we will enter in at the strait Gate; - that it is true Wisdom to employ our chief Concern upon things that are most valuable; - and that such is the Weakness of our Nature, and the Strength of Temptations, that without constant Application of Mind, we shall never be able to attain them; - that if We be "steadfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord, our Labour will not be in vain thro him." And,

Though the things of this World are sensible and present, yet have we not a sufficient Assurance of the Reality of a future State, and of the Rewards and Punishments of it? The Greatness and Eternity of which, is such an amazing Consideration, that no Distance can render them inconsiderable to a prudent and thinking Man. And tho we have the Conflict of contrary Principles; yet, (with our own due Concurrence,) the powerful Assistance of God, (which is never wanting to the faithful & obedient,) will be sufficient for us. But further,

Of the Reasons and Occasions of this Neglect.

And here, Not to mention the Disbelief of Men, (*) their inveterate Prejudice, (A) and perverse Obstinacy,

(*) It is pretended by the Libertine and Infidel, that he wants Evidence to convince him of the Truth of this Gospel we preach to him, and therefore he must be excused if he regard not the Salvation offered by it. But not to enter far into the Detail of this Question here, I would only ask him whether it be not possible for God to reveal his Will to Mankind. This, if he owns a God, and is not lost to all Use of his Reason, he cannot deny: and let him but consider the manifold Imperfections of human Reason, as diversified by the various Capacities, Ignorance, Inattentions, and Passions of Men, and the Distraction that must arise from every Man's being left without Guide or Rule to collect his own Scheme of Duty: and he cannot but confess that it is a thing the most desirable to Man, and most agreeable to the Goodness of God, that he should send forth his Light and his Truth, by a special Revelation of his Will direct, and by the Authority of his Command enjoin, a Rule of Duty to them. Let us then ask him, what Proofs and Evidences he could require of such Declarations coming from God; whether it is possible to conceive or imagine

Management of our little Affairs, and more reſolute and ſtrenuous in the Proſecution of them, than we are about the everlaſting Concernments of our Souls! - that we ſhould toil and take more Pains for the deceitful Riches, than for the true: and be contented to hazard more for a corruptible Crown, than for an incorruptible; - that we ſhould love Pleaſure, more than we do God; and mind our Bodies and things temporal, more than we do our Souls, and eternal Happineſs!

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Though the things of this World are ſenſible and preſent, yet have we not a ſufficient Aſſurance of the

Revelation; & laſtly, whether, ſuppoſing a divine Revelation to have been made, and ſuch Facts as are alledged in Proof of it, to have been performed near one thouſand eight hundred Years ago, it is poſſible for the Evidences of them to have been conveyed down to us at this Diſtance with greater Clearneſs than the Proofs of the Chriſtian Revelation are conveyed to us; and whether every Objection that now is, or can be made to it, might not have been urged againſt it by ſceptical Men, ſuppoſing it to have come originally from God?

If then we have all the Evidence of the Truth of it, that we could have, ſuppoſing it to have been true, we have all the Evidence that the Nature of the thing admits, and conſequently all that any reaſonable Man ought to inſiſt on: and therefore no Man can be excuſed before God by the Pretence of wanting Evidence, for refuſing to believe and obey the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

(A) Falſe and ſuperſtitious Notions; or groundleſs, unreaſonable, &c. (Page 212)

nacy, (A) as great Cauſes hereto, I ſhall only inſiſt on their "Worldly-Mindedneſs," and their "falſe Notions of Repentance," and "God's mercy;" and that particular One, the "Love of their Sins:" All which do immediately conſpire to our Neglect herein. And,

Firſt, Men neglect This their "ſo great Salvation" through a too much Love for the things of this World; which being preſent and viſible ſtrike powerfully upon the Senſes, and create earthly Deſires.

But, Could we for a Moment reflect that though the things of Eternity ſeem to be at a great Diſtance, yet they are as real, and as certain, as if they were actually preſent; and that if we neglect them not, will ere long be preſent, & be perfected in us, when all this World and its Glory will be paſſed away,

and

leſs, unreaſonable, unintelligible Opinions in Religion, taken up upon Prejudice, are a greater Impediment to Truth, than even the moſt profound Ignorance.

(A) This Temper is admirably expreſſed in Scripture by the Phraſe of a *ſtony Heart*. (Zech. vii. 12.) "they ſtopped their Ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, they made their Hearts as an Adamant-Stone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law." This was eminently the Temper of thoſe Jews, who, becauſe "John the Baptiſt came neither eating nor drinking, ſaid, he hath a Devil;" and becauſe "Chriſt came both eating and drinking, ſaid, he was a Wine-Bibber & a Glutton, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners." But, in Both theſe, and in all other various Circumſtances, "Wiſdom is juſtified of all her Children."

and be then absent for ever. But further:

Another Reason and Cause of our Neglect herein, is a false Presumption of "being in any Time safe, by Repentance."

Truly dangerous indeed! For, who can be sufficient for so great a Work, in so critical a Juncture as our last Moment? This is a Presumption, not only in a very dangerous Instance, but which has the greatest Appearance in the World of a Contradiction in it. For,

When a Man commits any Sin with a Design to repent of it, he designs at the same Time to be heartily sorry that he hath committed it, and though the same Circumstances of Temptation should again occur, never again to commit it.

But, if such a Design were really sincere and well-founded, what imaginable Cause can be assigned, why the Reason of it should not as much restrain him from the present, as from a future Compliance with Sin? No one certainly, but a Person infatuated "with the Deceitfulness of Sin" to the last Degree, can have any tollerable Conception, how he shall hereafter, and upon Principles truly religious, resolve to hate what the Force of his sinful Inclinations at the very present, carries him away upon; contrary to all the Motions of divine Grace, and the

Convictions of his own Reason.

Is it not much more natural to suppose that every sinful Complyance will betray him into greater Disorders, & that the further he "walks in the Sight of his Eyes, and in the Ways of his Heart," he will find it a Work of so much more Difficulty and Discouragement to enter upon the proper Methods of "renewing himself again to Repentance?"

Let us reflect how many Times we have heretofore deceived ourselves with vain and fugative Designs of repenting at a more convenient Season; and then answer it to our Consciences, (if we can,) why we should trust any longer to such Designs, or still proceed in so notorious a Manner to "chuse our own Delusion?" Certainly it becomes us rather to fear, lest thro the Deceitfulness of Sin," in so very common and repeated an Instance of it, we should at last grow obdurate, and more insensible to the Impressions, both of natural Conscience, and divine Grace.

This is observed, not to discourage the greatest Sinners; whose Case, however extremely difficult it may be, yet is not wholly desperate; but to stop Sinners, (if possible,) in their evil Courses, and to discourage them from continuing in them, lest in the End they should be hardned by it.

Rather doth it become us, sensible of the Difficul-

tie

ties, the Uncertainty of Leisure, & Precariousness of Capacity for it, forthwith to regard & prepare for it. — To repent is no easy Matter, especially under a long Course and Habit of Sin; it being not only a sorrowing for Sins past, but, (as much as in us lies,) an unliving the Sins we have committed, by labouring after the contrary Habits of Virtue and Goodness. — Let us only reflect how weak, how trifling an Excuse it will be, when our Judge shall reproach us with neglecting that great Salvation which his Mercy offered us, with being deaf to all the Calls of his Grace, & preferring the transient Interests or Pleasures of this Life to that Glory he had revealed to us, to say we intended some Time or other to be wiser and reform. — Again,

b We are further, &c. (under)

his Truth; and, consequently, make both his Promises and his Threats to be of no Effect: For it is the same God that both promiseth and threateneth; and whose Faithfulness is equally concerned to make good the One as well as the Other; And, if his Threats signify little, what Assurance can we have that his Promises signify more? But, what Shifts will not Men fly to for the Sake of their Sins, which because they cannot quietly, in Defiance, or with Despair of Mercy, retain, how will they stretch it to

Convictions of his own Reaſon.

Is it not much more natural to ſuppoſe that every ſinful Complyance will betray him into greater Diſorders, & that the further he "walks in the Sight of his Eyes, and in the Ways of his Heart," he will find it a Work of ſo much more Difficulty and Diſcouragement to enter upon the proper Methods of "renewing himſelf again to Repentance?"

Let us reflect how many Times we have heretofore deceived ourſelves with vain and fugative Deſigns of repenting at a more convenient Seaſon; and then anſwer it to our Conſciences, (if we can,) why we ſhould truſt any longer to ſuch Deſigns, or ſtill proceed in ſo notorious a Manner to "chuſe our own Deluſion?" Certainly it becomes us rather to fear, leſt thro the Deceitfulneſs of Sin," in ſo very common and repeated an Inſtance of it, we ſhould at laſt grow obdurate, and more inſenſible to the Impreſſions, both of natural Conſcience, and divine Grace.

This is obſerved, not to diſcourage the greateſt Sinners; whoſe Caſe, however extremely difficult it may be, yet is not wholly deſperate; but to ſtop Sinners, (if poſſible,) in their evil Courſes, and to diſcourage them from continuing in them, leſt in the End they ſhould be hardned by it.

Rather doth it become us, ſenſible of the Difficul-

We are further tempted hereto, "thro' a Misconceit of God's Mercifulneſs," which Sinners would feign believe to be too great ever to ſuffer any to periſh everlaſtingly; preſuming that God will not, at laſt, be ſo ſevere as he hath threatened he will.

They who thus extend God's Mercy to favour their Corruptions, ſeem to forget that by thus enlarging God's Lenity, they, at the ſame Time, enervate his Truth; and, conſequently, make both his Promiſes and his Threats to be of no Effect: For it is the ſame God that both promiſeth and threateneth; and whoſe Faithfulneſs is equally concerned to make good the One as well as the Other; And, if his Threats ſignify little, what Aſſurance can we have that his Promiſes ſignify more? But, what Shifts will not Men fly to for the Sake of their Sins, which becauſe they cannot quietly, in Defiance, or with Deſpair of Mercy, retain, how will they ſtretch it to

their own Length, beyond itſelf, even to a Fineneſs that will bear no Weight.

Men, by the Mercy of God, in this Light, do not underſtand that glorious Attribute of his Nature, which inclines him to pardon & ſave PENITENT Sinners, & is regulated by infinite Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Holineſs, and the Regards due to his ſovereign Power; but they mean an eaſy and compaſſionate Temper of Mind in that all-glorious Being, without Reaſon and without Bounds. (A)

God forbid that I ſhould in the leaſt hint any thing to the Diminution of his Mercy, without which Sinners could take no Satisfaction in contemplating his other Perfections; but yet, as it is neceſſary for us to have right Notions concerning the Divine Attributes, in Order to form our own Principles and Conduct aright, Men cannot be too much cautioned againſt dangerous Errors, concerning that of the divine Mercy in particular; there being no Miſtake of more dangerous Conſequence to them, than in this Article, or wherein, it is to be feared, they are more generally miſtaken.

When

(A) To expect that God will be merciful to us when we continue in our Sins, and do Deſpight to his Grace and Mercy, is not Faith, but a moſt daring and inſolent Preſumption; which will certainly fail us when we ſtand in the moſt need of a well-grounded Faith, at the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgement.

When we ſay, therefore, that God is merciful, we do not intend to ſay, that he will indifferently ſave all Mankind, or, when he comes to judge the World, that He will make no Diſtinction between wicked and good Men, in the Sentance he will then paſs upon them. — But, by a merciful God, we underſtand at the ſame Time, a holy, juſt, and wiſe God, in whom ALL his Attributes ſhine eminently, and are intimately united without interfering one with another.

We readily acknowledge, (and with all Thankfulneſs to God,) that it is thro' his Mercy we are ſaved; and that the Terms of Salvation are ſo highly favourable and advantageous to us. — And, it is the Mercy of God in admitting Chriſtians in general, to the Benefit of thoſe Terms which the Scriptures ſo highly celebrate: But, they no where promiſe Mercy to any particular Perſons, "who neglect ſo great Salvation," or refuſe to comply with the Terms of it. But,

After all, it muſt be confeſſed that the principal Cauſe of ſuch Neglect is,

Laſtly, Men's Love to their Sins, which is That which really firſt makes Men unbelieving and inconſiderate, worldly-minded and carnal, ſlighting of Repentance, and preſuming on divine Mercy, which

are all but mere Shifts to save beloved Sins, and for their Sakes to countenance any unreasonable Neglect of Salvation. For,

Regarding Iniquity in our Hearts, we shall always neglect Salvation in our Lives, and so lose our Souls by desiring to save our Sins.

To conclude this Head: — If Salvation neglected be so truly dangerous, let us, then, be humble for all past Neglects, and strive to amend and make up, (as far as we are able,) by our after-Obedience, and Attention, our former Follies.

Above all, it will concern us to avoid those grosser Sins, which, by their aggravating Nature, exceed this Neglect; and, by their Opposition to it, do even frustrate the Means of Salvation. For,

If barely to neglect be dangerous, much more condemning will those be, of which they are guilty who entice to Sin, and who discourage from Duty.

But, What Confusion of Face will then take-hold on such when God shall, (as most assuredly he will,) accounts with them for all these things! It will then be found a Matter hard enough to answer for our own Sins, and to bear the Guilt and Burden of our own Transgressions, without being accountable for the Offences of other Men. Indeed,

How great will their Condemnation be, (who like the

the Scribes and Pharisees;) "neither enter into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer those that would, to enter in."

Ordering, therefore, our own Conversation aright, let us set forward, in the Use of all proper Means, the Edification of our Brother; accounting it not only our Duty, but our Honour and Interest to be at all Times conversant in it; "doing it heartily, as to the Lord," - "to the bettering of the World, and to the saving of Souls in the great Day of the Lord Jesus;" which may not be neglected, but to our own exceeding and everlasting Destruction. For, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?" Which brings me,

Fourthly, (in the last Place,) to shew the Danger of such a Procedure.

This the Apostle hath expressly and emphatically declared by Way of Interrogation, "How shall we escape?" — intimating thereby the Certainty of the Punishment due to the Guilt.

Many Considerations there are, which highly aggravate the Fault of such Persons as contemptuously neglect the Proposal of a Favour, which it is both their Duty and their greatest Interest to accept; and many Circumstances make them more and more in-

excuſable, and juſtly to deſerve the ſevereſt Puniſhment, for their Ingratitude and Contempt.

The intrinſick Goodneſs and Excellency of the Thing itſelf, which they deſpiſe and neglect; - The great Value, the neceſſary and ſingular Importance of it; - The exceeding great Benefit, which, by being duly received, it would bring along with it; - And the extreme Evils which are conſequent upon the Neglect of it: The Power and Authority, the Greatneſs & Goodneſs of the Perſon, whoſe Favour we make light of; Our Subjection to him, and Dependance upon him, as our abſolute Governour; - Or our Obligation to him, as our greateſt Benefactor? The Dignity and Excellency of the Perſon, by whoſe Interpoſition the Benefit is procured, and by whom it is conveyed or ſent to us; The great Difficulties that were neceſſary to be underwent in Order to obtain it, or the great Coſt that was requiſite to purchaſe it: The Strength and Clearneſs of the Evidence, and the Number & Greatneſs of the Proofs made uſe of to aſſure us of the Certainty of it: All theſe are Circumſtances which greatly increaſe our Obligation, to accept with Thankfulneſs the Advantage propoſed, to make that due Uſe of it for which it was conferred, and be influenced by it in all the Actions of our Lives. — And,

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If we neglect or despise it, or behave ourselves ill and unworthily under it; all the same Circumstances do highly aggravate our Guilt, and render us inexcusable, and justly deserve the severest of Punishments for our Ingratitude and Contempt.

To reject That, which, in the Nature of the Thing itself, is of the highest Excellency & intrinsick Goodness, is a Mark of the greatest Depravity and Corruption of Manners. To despise That, which is of the last and utmost Importance to us; on the due receiving, or on the neglecting of which, depends the greatest Happiness or the extremest Misery our Nature is capable of; is the greatest Folly imaginable. To disobey the Commands of our Supreme Governour, whose Power is absolute, and his Authority uncontroulable; is the highest Insolence; and to oppose the Will of our greatest Benefactor, is the basest Ingratitude: To slight and reject a gracious Proposal of Mercy, procured for us by the Interposition, and conveyed to us by the Hands, of a Person of the greatest Dignity and Excellency; and who was likewise, in Order to it, necessarily to undergo great Sufferings & Indignities, is the highest Degree of Perverseness possible. And to withstand,

(*) An Addition being here made, occasions this Modification in the Page, as far as the Addition extends. (Serm. LXXVII.)

ſtand, and not be convinced by ſuch Proofs, as both in Number, Strength, and Clearneſs, ſuit the beſt and greateſt Evidence that can be expected or in Reaſon deſired; is the utmoſt Obſtinacy, and moſt inexcuſably wilful Oppoſition to the Truth.

All theſe, with other aggravating Circumſtances attend the rejecting, or, (which is the very ſame,) the diſobeying the Goſpel; and are all of them contained in the Words before us; which need no other Light but their own to illuſtrate the Truth, and exert the Force which they import. It appearing how inevitable, certain, and inſupportable the Puniſhment of neglecting ſo great Salvation will be likely to prove.

First, From its being a Salvation. Much more,

Secondly, From its being ſo Great.

Thirdly, From its being Neglected: And that,

Fourthly, By Us.

All which being Circumſtances aggravating Guilt, How ſhall We? - None ſhall, none can eſcape, who neglect ſo great Salvation. For conſider,

First, That it is Salvation we neglect, which is the only Deliverance by which we can hope to eſcape from Sin and Miſery, from the Power and Tyranny

Tyranny of the Devil, and from the Punishment of Death; which therefore being neglected, will necessarily make an Escape from these, impossible to us; because the Means and Opportunity of escaping will be lost with it. For, to escape, and to be saved, are, in Reference to our final State, synonimous Terms, importing one and the same thing; insomuch, that to be saved, is to escape; and how therefore shall we escape if we neglect it; if we disregard both the Time and Means to it? For God hath shewn us but One only Way whereby to escape, which is by the Salvation of the Gospel; the which therefore, if we neglect, we thereby lose our last and only Remedy: By losing This, we lose our all, for besides it there is none other. — But further,

Another Reason incurring Danger, is, from the Greatness of it: For, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so GREAT Salvation?"

To have the Means of Salvation offered; & that by God himself; purchased for us by his Son; and clearly revealed to us; These do all of them add to the Aggravation of our Guilt, if, after all, we still persist in it. — For,

First, We have here the intrinsick Goodness and Excellency of the Thing itself, which wicked Men

reject; intimated as a just Ground why they ſhould not eſcape unpuniſhed. It is in itſelf, a great Salvation; a Salvation from Sin and Miſery, from the Power and Tyranny of the Devil, & from the Puniſhment of Death.

Sin, in its own Nature, even ſeparate from the Conſideration of its being an obſtinate diſobeying the revealed Will of God, is in itſelf utterly unreaſonable; it is, acting in Oppoſition to the known Reaſon and Proportion of things; contrary to that eternal Order and Equity, which God has eſtabliſhed in the original Conſtitution of Nature; oppoſite to the Light of Reaſon, the Dictates of Conſcience, the unprejudiced Judgment of our own Mind, the agreeing Opinion of all wiſe and good Men, and even alſo of bad Men themſelves; contrary to all our natural Notions and Apprehenſions of the Attributes & Will of God; deſtructive to the publick Welfare and Happineſs of Mankind, the Health of our own Bodies, the Peace of our Minds, and the Support of our good Name and Reputation amongſt wiſe & reaſonable Men; It is a ſubjecting our Reaſon to vile Affections, to inordinate and brutiſh Appetites, to diſorderly and ungoverned Paſſions; which is the greateſt and the worſt Slavery that can be; to ſee, and approve what is good, and yet

not be able to prevail with ourselves to practise it; so sensible of the destructive Consequences of Sin, and yet, through the Strength of evil Habits, continue under the Power and Dominion of it; To feel ourselves deprived of our present Happiness, and of our best Hopes of all that is to come; and yet continue in the Practice of such Vices, as are the only Causes of all this Misery: This is evidently the the greatest Misery, and most slavish Bondage that can be. — Now,

To have a Way proposed to us, of being delivered from this Body of Sin, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God; to have a Method laid before us, of being rescued from this Misery, & put into a Way of securing both our present Happiness, & that which is to come: This is the Offer of a great Salvation; which whoever shall neglect, is absolutely inexcusable, and justly deserves to fall into that Misery, from which he would not accept a Deliverance.

The Light of Nature itself directs us thus far, & thus much all true Philosophy ever pretended to, viz. to convince Men of the Reasonableness & Necessity of endeavouring, by all the Helps of Reason and Natural Religion, to deliver themselves from the Bondage and Slavery of Sin. — Now,

The Gospel proposes to us an infinitely more ef-

fectual Way of obtaining this End, than any Philosophy, under the Light of Nature was ever able to do; shewing us most clearly the heinous Nature of Sin, and the fatal Consequences of it: all the Obligations of our Duty in a more clear and particular Manner, and the infinite Advantage of complying with them; the true Expiation of Sin, and the Certainty of our Repentance being acceptable in the Sight of God, and effectual to obtain Pardon; and offering us sufficient Helps and Assistances, to enable us to perform what it requires of us in Order to our future and eternal Happiness.

To those who have never heard of the Gospel, it may be presumed God will be more favourable in Judgment; the imperfect Direction they are under, without any certain Rule of Duty, or any sure Prospect of Reward upon the Performance even of what Reason approved, will be some Mitigation of their Mistakes and Impieties. But for a wicked Christian, there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation to consume him. He sins under the fullest & clearest Light, against Knowledge and Conviction, and against a solemn Vow and Contract with God, with a full View of the [illegible] worthy, who tramples under foot the Blood of the Son

be saved from the Punishment of Sin, and is in his Nature unqualified for the Rewards of Holiness. But, when to this Choice of Wickedness, there is added moreover a direct Contempt of God; when God has declared to Men his Will by an immediate Revelation, and confirmed the Obligations of Nature by his express Command; when he has offered us Pardon upon our sincere Repentance, and vouchsafed us the Assistance of his Spirit to enable us to perform it, and promised us eternal Life upon our Performance of it, and has obliged us to accept this Salvation under Pain of the severest Penalties; the Wrath of God being now most expressly revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men; After all this, to continue still to despise so great Salvation, is adding Rebellion to our Sin, and with a high Hand exalting ourselves against God; it is an avowed despising and contemning his Authority, and expressly declaring that we will not have Him to reign over us."

If therefore Sinning barely against the Law of Nature, was sufficient to consign Men to unavoidable Destruction; how shall We escape, if we conspire to Sin both against Nature and Revelation? The Servant that KNEW NOT his Lord's Will, was yet to be beaten with Stripes, because he did things

the Conſequences of his Actions; eternal Happineſs is ſet diſtinctly before him on the one Hand, and eternal Miſery on the other; he is daily called upon by the Word, by the Miniſters of the Goſpel, by the inward Suggeſtions of the Holy Spirit to his Soul and Conſcience, to attend to theſe Proſpects, and mind the things that belong to his Peace. And his Gratitude is under the ſtrongeſt Obligations to Duty, from thoſe amazing Inſtances of divine Mercy, made known to him in the Myſtery of his Redemption.

This is, in the, &c. (under)

This is, in the Nature of the Thing itſelf, a great Salvation; and to neglect it, even ſeparate from the Conſideration of the particular Diſhonour done to God by rejecting an immediate Revelation of his Will, is intrinſically in itſelf a moſt inexcuſable Neglect, & juſtly deſerves the ſevereſt Puniſhment. For, Sins committed with ſo many Aggravations of Guilt, the Furnace of Wrath will be ſeven Times hotter, and burn with a diſtinguiſhed Fury. For if he who offends againſt the Light of Nature, be left without Excuſe to the Juſtice of God: if he who deſpiſed the Law of Moſes died without Mercy; of how much ſorer Puniſhment ſhall he be thought worthy, who tramples under foot the Blood of the Son

be saved from the Punishment of Sin, and is in his Nature unqualified for the Rewards of Holiness. But, when to this Choice of Wickedness, there is added moreover a direct Contempt of God; when God has declared to Men his Will by an immediate Revelation, and confirmed the Obligations of Nature by his express Command; when he has offered us Pardon upon our sincere Repentance, and vouchsafed us the Assistance of his Spirit to enable us to perform it, and promised us eternal Life upon our Performance of it, and has obliged us to accept this Salvation under Pain of the severest Penalties, the Wrath of God being now most expressly revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men; After all this, to continue still to despise so great Salvation, is adding Rebellion to our Sin, and with a high Hand exalting ourselves against God; it is an avowed despising and contemning his Authority, and expressly declaring that we will not have Him to reign over us."

If therefore Sinning barely against the Law of Nature, was sufficient to consign Men to unavoidable Destruction; how shall We escape, if we continue to Sin both against Nature and Revelation? The Servant that KNEW NOT his Lord's Will, was yet to be beaten with Stripes, because he did things

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2dly, The Conſideration, &c. (under)

2dly. The Conſideration, that the Goſpel is an expreſs and poſitive Revelation of the Will of God; is a very high Aggravation of the Sin of neglecting ſo great Salvation.

He that deſires not to be delivered from the Dominion of Sin, and has no Thirſt after a Life of Righteouſneſs; for that very Reaſon deſerves not to be

be saved from the Punishment of Sin, and is in his Nature unqualified for the Rewards of Holiness. But, when to this Choice of Wickedness, there is added moreover a direct Contempt of God; when God has declared to Men his Will by an immediate Revelation, and confirmed the Obligations of Nature by his express Command; when he has offered an Pardon upon our sincere Repentance, and vouchsafed us the Assistance of his Spirit to enable us to perform it, and promised us eternal Life upon our performance of it, and has obliged us to accept this Salvation under Pain of the severest Penalties, the Wrath of God being now most expressly revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men: After all this, to continue still to despise so great Salvation, is adding Rebellion to our Sin, and with a high Hand exalting ourselves against God: It is an avowed despising and contemning his Authority, and expressly declaring that we will not have Him to reign over us."

If therefore Sinning barely against the Law of Nature, was sufficient to consign Men to unavoidable Destruction; how shall We escape, if we continue to Sin both against Nature and Revelation? The Servant that KNEW NOT his Lord's Will, was yet to be beaten with Stripes, because he did things

in themselves worthy of Stripes; — How much more severely must They expect to be punished, who do the same things in direct Opposition to the express Will and known Command of their Master? This was the Reason why God punished the Sins of his own People the Jews, with greater Severity than those of the Heathen: "the Times of that Ignorance God winked at, (as the Apostle expresses it,) But Now," under Pain of his severest Displeasure, he peremptorily "commands all Men, every where, to repent;" There being no Excuse left, nothing that can alleviate their Condemnation, if Men, after that the clearest Light is come into the World, will still obstinately continue in their Works of Darkness.

3dly, The Dignity and Excellency of the Person, by and thro whom this great Salvation is proposed to us, is a further Aggravation of the Sin of rejecting it. "If the Word, spoken by Angels, was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence of Reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord?"

The Dignity of the Person, by whose Interposition any Favour is procured, and by whom it is transmitted, shows both the Greatness and Importance of the Thing itself, and the Love and Condescension

of the Original Author of it; and the neglecting it in this Case implies not only Folly, Insolence, and Rebellion, but moreover, the greatest Obstinacy also, which no Authority can prevail over, and the basest Ingratitude, which no Kindness or Condescention can overcome: Which, therefore, whoever is guilty of, must be confessed most justly to deserve the severest of Punishments. Again,

Thirdly and lastly, The Strength and Clearness of the Evidence, and the Number and Greatness of the Proofs, made use of to assure us of the Truth and Certainty of the Gospel; is the highest Aggravation of the Guilt of those, who neglect or disobey it; and that which of all other things, renders them the most absolutely inexcusable. The Gospel "was at first begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed to us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost."

The Testimony which the Spirit of God has given to the Truth of the Gospel, contains a great Variety of undeniable Proofs, which St. Paul calls "the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit." The many large and particular Prophecies, which from the Beginning of the World were dictated by the

Spirit concerning the Perſon of our Saviour, and the Nature, Succeſs, and Effects of his Doctrine: The Conception of our Lord by the Miraculous Operation of the Spirit, and the manifold Wonders which attended his Birth: The Viſible Deſcent of the Spirit upon him at his Baptiſm; accompanied with a Voice from Heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God: The Miracles which he worked during the Courſe of his Miniſtry, by the "Spirit of God;" as the Scripture frequently expreſſes it: His Reſurrection from the Dead, which likewiſe the Scripture aſcribes to the Power of the ſame Spirit. But above all, that moſt plentiful Effuſion of the Spirit upon the Apoſtles at Pentecoſt; whereby they were indued with Power from on High, to preach the Goſpel with Authority and Efficacy; being enabled particularly to ſpeak with Tongues, and to do even greater Works than our Saviour himſelf had worked upon Earth, according to his Promiſe which he made to them before his Departure; Theſe Teſtimonies of the Spirit of God, contain ſuch Demonſtrative Proof of the Truth of the Goſpel, as leaves Them who reject it, capable of no Excuſe; ſince they deſpiſe the laſt & greateſt Means, that ſhall be, or indeed could be made uſe of, for their Conviction and Reformation.

The

The ſtronger the Evidence of any Truth be, the more inexcuſable is the making Oppoſition to it. And the higheſt Aggravation of all, is, to continue to oppoſe a Truth, after the beſt and greateſt Evidence has been given of it, that the Nature of the thing was capable of. Oppoſition in This Caſe, againſt the greateſt Evidence that is reaſonably to be expected, can proceed from nothing but either inexcuſable Obſtinacy & Perverſeneſs; or a Love of ſome things, and a Reſolution not to part with them, the keeping of which is inconſiſtent with the Acknowledgment of the Truth. Their rejecting it, cannot proceed from their Want of ſufficient Conviction, but only from a Love of Vice, and a Reſolution not to be reformed; which is a Degree of Incorrigibleneſs, in which there is no Hope of Excuſe, and for which there remains no more Remedy; and which there extraordinary Favours are not to be preſumed on.

The Neglect of ſmall Kindneſſes may be paſſed over; but, the Abuſe of much Love generally ends in great Hatred.

So that it cannot otherwiſe be; but that after all which God hath done to ſave us, our Neglect of ſo great Salvation muſt inevitably expoſe us to as great a Condemnation: For as ſuch a Neglect me-

Spirit concerning the Perſon of our Saviour, and the Nature, Succeſs, and Effects of his Doctrine: The Conception of our Lord by the Miraculous Operation of the Spirit, and the manifold Wonders which attended his Birth: The Viſible Deſcent of the Spirit upon him at his Baptiſm, accompanied with a Voice from Heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God; The Miracles which he worked during the Courſe of his Miniſtry, by the "Spirit of God;" as the Scripture frequently expreſſes it: His Reſurrection from the Dead, which likewiſe the Scripture aſcribes to the Power of the ſame Spirit. But above all, that moſt plentiful Effuſion of the Spirit upon the Apoſtles at Pentecoſt; whereby they were indued with Power from on High, to preach the Goſpel with Authority and Efficacy; being enabled particularly to ſpeak with Tongues, and to do even greater Works than our Saviour himſelf had worked upon Earth, according to his Promiſe which he made to them before his Departure; Theſe Teſtimonies of the Spirit of God, contain ſuch Demonſtrative Proof of the Truth of the Goſpel, as leaves Them who reject it, capable of no Excuſe; ſince they deſpiſe the laſt & greateſt Means, that ſhall be, or indeed could be made uſe of, for their Conviction and Reformation.

The

come into the World, and Men still continue in their Works of Darkness; then it becomes evident that their Wickedness proceeds Not from Ignorance and Want of Information, but from Will and Choice: and consequently, "they have no Cloak for their Sin."

These are, confessedly, great Advantages, if used as Means of Improvement, as they were intended, and, in Ingenuity, ought to be; - Otherwise, if neglected, they will as severely condemn us. — For,

After God hath done - &c. — (under)

After God hath done so great Things for us, what can more reasonably be expected from us, than that we should profit and improve by them? But,

If all that hath been already done for us prove not sufficient, it is certain, that nothing More, or Otherwise can possibly do us good; neither can we be deserving of further Favour, having already received the Grace of God in vain.

Where so much proves lost and ill-bestowed, there is not only great Reason to fear that no more will be granted, but to expect, (with the unprofitable Servant in the Gospel,) that even what we have, will be taken away from us, and be proportionably revenged; because the greater the Favour, the greater will the Provocation be, if we neglect it. Great and extraordinary Favours are not to be presumed on.

The Neglect of small Kindnesses may be passed over; but, the Abuse of much Love generally ends in great Hatred.

So that it cannot otherwise be, but that after all which God hath done to save us, our Neglect of so great Salvation must inevitably expose us to as great a Condemnation: For as such a Neglect me-

rits the heavieſt Vengence, ſo it will find the leaſt Mercy. But further,

Thirdly, The Provocation riſeth yet higher, and of Courſe the Danger with it, in that it is NEGLECTED; which implies it to be loſt through mere Careleſſneſs, and ſhews, that it is neither impoſſible or unreaſonable; and therefore, the more inexcuſable ſhall we be, if we diſregard it.

Is it too mean an Employment to mind our eternal Welfare? Are God & Religion things ſo inconſiderable as not to deſerve our Notice?

The Riches and Honours of this World, however uncertain, never hinder the Covetous or the Ambitious from earneſtly purſuing them; and ſhall not the mighty Arguments then, which God hath uſed to aſſure us of the Certainty of another Life, prevail on us to look more ſeriouſly after it?

Shall the amazing Love of the Father, - the inexpreſſible Sufferings of the Son, - and the miraculous Deſcent and powerful Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, have no more Impreſſion on our Minds than to leave us indifferent and unwilling to obtain the Happineſs They have ſo kindly profered to us?

"O Fools, and ſlow of Heart to believe, not only what the Prophets have ſpoken, but alſo what our Lord hath declared, - what God himſelf hath given

Teſtimony

Teſtimony to, & the Holy Ghoſt hath confirmed!"

Beſides; Is it not our Intereſt to be concerned in this? Is it equal to us whether our Souls are immortal, or not? whether they live in eternal Happineſs, or in endleſs and unſpeakable Miſery?

Surely then, a Neglect in ſo great a Concern, muſt be very provoking, and accordingly, muſt expoſe us to a ſevere Judgment. But,

Fourthly, The Danger of Neglecting is ſtill greater, if it is conſidered further, that it is We, who are Chriſtians, on which the Apoſtle ſeems to have laid an Emphaſis in the Text; and who conſequently, of all Perſons, ſhall be ſure not to eſcape, if We, ſo highly obliged, neglect it. For,

In the preceeding Verſe he tells us, that "The Jews, for tranſgreſſing the Law of Moſes, were to receive a juſt Recompence of Reward;" and "How then ſhall We eſcape, (ſaith he,) if we neglect ſo great, even a much greater Salvation?" fairly intimating by it, that Chriſtians, as they have greater Privileges and better Encouragement than others, ſo their Abuſe of them will bind them over to proportionably greater, and more ſevere Punihment: So that We, if we neglect, muſt by no Means think to go unpuniſhed; indeed, of all others, we muſt expect the ſeverest Punihments. For, As we are told

that there are Degrees in Glory, ſo we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that there are in Puniſhments alſo, which God will proportion to Men's reſpective Privileges and Encouragements.

If we ſtill continue in our Sins after ſuch wonderful, wiſe, and gracious Means uſed for our Recovery, we ſhall be more wicked and leſs worthy of Mercy than thoſe miſerable apoſtate Spirits whom Chriſt paſſed by and had no Compaſſion of when he delivered us. The Sins of Men after Chriſt's having lived with them and died for them, are by many Aggravations made worſe than that of the Devils themſelves. For they never ſinned againſt Example, being the firſt offenders, nor againſt C[illegible] God's under-foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done Deſpite to the Spirit of Grace?"

There was ſomething to be ſaid for thoſe who lived in Heathen Darkneſs, and under imperfect Types & Shadows; but for Us, who are under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, who are inſtructed in the whole Will of God — who have the ſtrongeſt Demonſtration of another Life after this — the moſt explicit Promiſes that we ſhall be Partakers of it if we obey God's Laws;

Laws. We, who have the plainest Rules to direct us in our Obedience laid before us with so much Clearness of Evidence, that even Ignorance itself is left without Excuse. — What can be said for us, if after these, and the like great Opportunities put into our Hands of entering into God's everlasting Rest, any of us should fall short through Disobedience or Unbelief.

In vain, therefore, shall we boast ourselves of being of the best constituted Religion, of our most holy Faith, if we do not build upon it Materials accordingly, and exceed in Righteousness as we exceed in the Means to it.

Whatever unknown Way to escape, God may be supposed to have in Reserve for the Salvation of an honest Heathen, or a conscientious Jew, there can be none for a careless Christian to presume on, who hath already neglected God's most gracious and extraordinary Proposals to save him.

So that a Salvation, - so Great, - Neglected, - and that by Us, "How shall we escape?" It is impossible, and in vain to hope it.

"Nothing, (in such a Case,) will remain, but a fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation to consume us."

Let us therefore remember the dreadful Judgement that hangs over us, from which there is no escaping but by acting up to the great Obligations of Obedience we are under, let us immediately set about the great Work of making our Calling and Election sure, lest we be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin, lest it be in vain for us that a Law

God's Patience and Long-suffering, being upon the first Offence cast into Hell, nor lastly against Remedy, there having never been any Means offered for their Recovery. But for us Men, all that the Love of God could will, or his Wisdom contrive for our Good, has been made use of. And "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?"

In vain, therefore, &c. (under) —

In vain, therefore, do wicked Christians flatter themselves in their careless Profession of the very best Religion, for which they will certainly be so much the worse, if, by their strict Regard to it, they do not become the better by it; Indeed, "it had been better for us not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after having known it, to depart from the holy Commandment delivered unto us." "If He that despised the Law of Moses died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment, (suppose ye,) shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under-foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done Despite to the Spirit of Grace?"

There was something to be said for those who lived in Heathen Darkness, and under imperfect Types & Shadows; but for Us, who are under the Christian Dispensation, who are instructed in the whole Will of God — who have the strongest Demonstration of another Life after this — the most explicit Promises that we shall be Partakers of it if we obey God's

Laws;

Laws; We, who have the plainest Rules to direct us in our Obedience laid before us with so much Clearness of Evidence, that even Ignorance itself is left without Excuse. — What can be said for us, if after these, and the like great Opportunities put into our Hands of entering into God's everlasting Rest, any of us should fall short through Disobedience or Unbelief.

In vain, therefore, shall we boast ourselves of being of the best constituted Religion, of our most holy Faith, if we do not build upon it Materials accordingly, and exceed in Righteousness as we exceed in the Means to it.

Whatever unknown Way to escape, God may be supposed to have in Reserve for the Salvation of an honest Heathen, or a conscientious Jew, there can be none for a careless Christian to presume on, who [illegible] neglected God's most gracious and express Revelation of himself, since his Son is come into the World; lest a Promise of Life being made us, we should not only fail of entering in, but the gracious Overture itself should be objected in Reproach and Aggravation of our Sin; and all the infinite Mercies of the Gospel should bring no other Fruit to us, but only that thereby we might receive the greater Damnation.

How reaſonable, then, is it, that our ſerious Belief and Remembrance of This, ſhould effectually warn us againſt ſuch Neglect, and powerfully excite us to "work out our own, ſo great Salvation;" "giving all Diligence, that we may make our Calling and Election ſure;" "that we may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord."

This is the Uſe to which I ſhall apply what hath been already ſaid. — And here,

Let this Conſideration be our Warning not to neglect ſo great Salvation; to which moſt are prone, and in which none can be ſafe: For, how few, alas! are there who mind This their great Concern as they ought; or with a like Faithfulneſs as they do their other Affairs; or as they have the Examples of Chriſt, & his firſt Followers for it! Rather indeed,

Is there any thing leſs ſet-by, or endeavoured after, in this World, than the great Concern before us, relating to our Happineſs hereafter? — Is there any thing for which there is more Thought taken, than for the things of this preſent Life? — "What ſhall we eat, and what ſhall we drink, and wherewithall ſhall we be cloathed," are the chief, if not the only ſolicitous Queries of Mankind; and about which no Pains, no Coſt, no Time is ſpared; Whilſt "the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs" are

ſought

ſought after, either not at all, or with a ſingular Indifference. — This ſurely is not to act as reaſonable Men; much leſs as Chriſtians, and Diſciples of our Lord.

There are but two Fates attending all Mankind; and thoſe are, either Salvation, or Damnation! What theſe import, it imports us to conſider: One of them we are now every one of us, for ourſelves, living for, or daily dying to; and, according to the preſent Care we ourſelves take for it, a little Time will decide our Lot, in either the one, or the other, for ever.

If no Warning will ſerve our Turn, we muſt even take the Conſequence; and could we but be perſuaded to believe and conſider what That is likely to be, there would need no more to prevail with us to begin forthwith, in good Earneſt, and without any further Neglect, to "work-out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling;" that, through the Grace and Mercy of God, (which are never wanting to the willing,) we may even yet eſcape all threatened Danger.

"Let the Time paſt, then, of our Lives," and of our Neglect herein ſeem, now at laſt, not only ſufficient, but too much to us, wherein to have hazarded ſo great a Concern; and let us, from a thorough

Senſe of the Danger of ſuch a Neglect, immediately conſecrate the Remainder of our Lives to the Practice of our Duty, and a due Preparation for our latter End; well knowing, that "the End of it will be Peace and Reſt; and the Effect of it Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever."

Sermon

SERMON LXXVIII.

On the Diſſolution of the World.

2 Peter iii. 11. "All theſe things ſhall be diſſolved."

Being not only the CREATED, (1) and PRESERVED, (2) but, (when we by Tranſgreſſion fell,) the REDEEMED (3) of the Lord alſo; "How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great Salvation?" (4) It is impoſſible: for "All theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved."

Theſe Words preſent to us an awful View of the Cataſtrophe of the World: whoſe firſt Commenſement we have already conſidered; (5) let us now contemplate the laſt Cloſe of all Things; For,

Magnificent as the Fabrick of the World is, it was not, however, intended for perpetual Duration. It was erected as a temporary Habitation for a Race of Beings, who, after acting here a probationary Part, were to be removed into a higher Place of Exiſtence. — As there was a Time fixed from all Eternity

(1) Sermon 67, 68. (2) Sermon 69, 70. (3) Sermon 71, 72, 73, 74. (4) Sermon 75, 76, 77. (5) Sermon 67, 68.

nity for its CREATION, ſo there is a Time fixed for its DISSOLUTION, "in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up."

The Diſſolution of the material Syſtem is an Article of our Faith, often alluded-to in the Old Teſtament, and clearly predicted in the New. It is an Article of Faith ſo far from being incredible, that many Appearances in Nature lead to the Belief of it.

We ſee all terreſtrial Subſtances changing their Form; Nothing, that conſiſts of Matter, being formed for perpetual Cotinuance. Every thing around us is impaired and overcome by Time: waxes old by Degrees, and tends to Decay.

There is Reaſon, therefore, to believe that a Structure, ſo complex as the World, muſt be liable to the ſame Law; & ſhall, in ſome Period or other, undergo the ſame Fate.

Thro many Changes the Earth has already paſſed; many Shocks it has received, and is ſtill often receiving: Theſe demonſtrate the inconſtant, diſſoluble, periſhing Nature of this World, & all things in it; that it neither was from Eternity, nor will endure forever. What is ſtrictly eternal, is ſtrictly incapable of Motion, and any poſſible Alteration in any

any ſingle Inſtance whatever; but muſt remain where it was, and what it was, without the moſt minute Variation. But how numerous and indiſputable are the Appearances, that demonſtrate that Immutability doth not belong to our Globe, which is every Moment varying its Situation and Place, liable to innumerable Changes on its Surface, the Diſſolution of its Mountains, and the Elevation of its Plains, with internal Commotions, to be reconverted into that Caos, out of which the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of the Supreme Being originally formed it; containing within itſelf the certain Cauſes of that final Diſſolution, (1) long foretold by divine Revelation.

Thus, this mighty Fabrick of the Earth, tho' its Foundations

(1) A great Portion of what is now dry Land, appears, from various Tokens, to have been once covered with Water. Continents bear the Marks of having been violently rent and torn aſunder from one another. New Iſlands have ariſen from the Bottom of the Ocean; thrown-up by the Force of ſubterraneous Fire. Formidable Earthquakes have, in diverſe Quarters, ſhaken the Globe; and at this Hour terrify, with their Alarms, many Parts of it. Burning Mountains have, for Ages, been diſcharging Torrents of Flame; and from Time to Time, renew their Exploſions in various Regions.

All theſe Circumſtances ſhew, that in the Bowels of the Earth, the Inſtruments of its Diſſolution are formed. The Ground on which we tread is undermined. Combuſtible Materials are ſtored. The Train is laid; when the Mine is to ſpring none of us can fore-ſee.

Foundations are ſo firmly fixed, that no created Power can ſhake them, yet trembles, "like a Reed ſhaken with the Wind," at the Nod of Omnipotence. At his Word, the proudeſt Hills leap from their Foundations: the ſolid Rocks rend in Peices, and the lofty Mountains, whoſe aſpiring Summits pierce the Clouds, become level with the humble Valley, or open in Furnaces of tempeſtuous and unextinguiſhable Fires. Our ſtatelieſt Cities, our ſplendid Temples, our lofty Spires, our ſtrongeſt Fortreſſes, our coſtly Palaces, our Gardens of Pleaſure, all our Pride and Security have their Foundations in the Duſt: and what hath been the Labour of innumerable Hands, the Work of Ages, and the Conſumption of the greateſt Treaſures, is not Proof againſt a Moment's Shock; but in an Inſtant ſinks into univerſal and eternal Deſtruction.

Providence hath been pleaſed to give us dreadful Inſtances of this Truth, to warn us of the approaching Diſſolution of this earthly Fabrick, and that the Hour is coming, when all its Beauty will be turned into Ruins, if not entirely diſſolve its whole Frame; and from its Deſolation, produce a beautiful and happy Manſion for ſome happy Beings, who ſhall never pollute it with our Crimes, nor render its Purification neceſſary by the Waters of another Deluge

or by the devouring Flames of a ſecond Conflagration.

To our View, who only behold its Surface, it may appear firm & unſhaken, & we indulge, in the mean while, our Pleaſures and Purſuits with full Security, whilſt ſuch awful Scenes, as the Concluſion of the Elements, and the Diſſolution of the World, are foreign to our Thoughts, Yet,

As it is certain that ſome Generation of Men muſt witneſs this great Cataſtrophe, it is fit and proper that we ſhould ſometimes look forward to it.

Such Proſpects may not, indeed, be alluring to the Generality of Men; - but they carry a Grandeur and Solemnity, which are congenial to ſome of the moſt dignified Feelings in our Nature, and tend to produce Elevation of Thought.

Amidſt the Circle of Levities and Follies, of little Pleaſures and little Cares, which fill-up the ordinary Round of Life, it is neceſſary that we be occaſionally excited to attend to what is ſerious and great. Such Events as are now to be the Subject of our Meditation, awake the ſlumbering Mind; check the Licentiouſneſs of idle Thought, and bring home our Recollection to what moſt concerns us, as Men and Chriſtians.

Let us think what Aſtoniſhment would have filled

our Minds, and what devout Emotions would have ſwelled our Hearts, if we could have been Spectators of the CREATION of the World; if we had ſeen the Earth, when it aroſe at firſt, "without Form and Void," and beheld its Parts arranged by the divine Word; if we had heard the Voice of the Almighty, calling Light to ſpring-forth from the, "Darkneſs that was on the Face of the Deep;" if we had ſeen the Sun ariſing, for the firſt Time, in the Eaſt with majeſtick Glory; and all Nature inſtantly beginning to teem with Life.

This wonderful Scene, it was impoſſible that any human Eye could behold. - It was a Spectacle afforded only to Angels and ſuperior Spirits. - But, to a Spectacle no leſs aſtoniſhing, (the final Diſſolution of the World,) we know there ſhall be many human Witneſſes. - The Race of Men living in That laſt Age, ſhall ſee the Preſages of the Approaching fatal Day. - "There ſhall be Signs in the Sun, (as the Scripture informs us,) and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth, Diſtreſs of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring, Men's Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe things which are coming on the Earth; for the Powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken." - They ſhall clearly perceive, that univerſal Nature is tending

-ding to Ruin, and the final Conflagration kindling around them.

How amazingly great and awful is the Repreſentation of That tremendous Day, (1) which, abſtracted from its ſpiritual Meaning, and conſidered only as a ſtately Peice of Machinery, well deſerves our Attention; and we may venture to ſay has not its Superior, perhaps not its Equal, in any of the moſt celebrated Maſters of Greece and Rome.

All that is gloomy or beautiful in the Atmoſphere, - all that is ſtriking or magnificent in every Element, is taken-in to heighten the Idea. - Yet nothing is diſproportionate; but an uniform Air of ineffable Majeſty, & Greatneſs, exalts, and ennobles the Whole — Obſerve the Aſpect of This auguſt Perſonage; - All the Brightneſs of the Sun ſhines in his Countenance, and all the Rage of the Fire burns in his Feet. - See his Apparel; the Clouds compoſe his Robe, and the Drapery of the Skie floats upon his Shoulders, the Rain-Bow forms his Diadem, and that which "compaſſeth the Heaven with a glorious Circle," is the Ornament of his Head. - Behold his Attitude; One Foot ſtands on the Ocean, and the other reſts on the Land. - The wide expanded Earth, and

(1) Rev. 10 Chapter, 6 firſt Verſes. Serm. LXXVIII.

and the World of Waters, ſerve as Pedeſtals for thoſe mighty Colums. - Conſider the Action; his Hand is lifted up to the Height of the Stars, He ſpeaks, and the Regions of the Firmament echo with the mighty Accents, as the midnight Deſart reſounds with the Lion's Roar. - The Artillery of the Skies is diſcharged at the Signal; a Peal of ſeven-fold Thunder ſpreads the Alarm, and prepares the World to receive his Orders. - To finiſh all, and give the higheſt Grandeur, as well as the utmoſt Solemnity, to the Repreſentation, hear the Decree that iſſues from his Mouth; "He ſwears by him that liveth forever and ever."

In whatever a Manner ſo majeſtic a Perſon had expreſſed himſelf, he could not fail of commanding univerſal Attention.

But when he confirms his Speech by a moſt ſacred and inviolable Oath, we are not only wrapt in ſilent Suſpence, but overwhelmed with the profoundeſt Awe. - He ſwears "that Time ſhall be no longer." - Was ever Voice ſo full of Terror! ſo big with Wonder! It proclaims not the Fall of Empires, but the final Period of all things. - It ſtops the Courſe of Nature. - Bids Ages and Generations ceaſe to roll; and, with One potent Word, conſigns a whole World to Diſſolution.

Realizing

Realizing, then, this awful Scene, imagining ourſelves to be already Spectators of it, let us,

Firſt, Contemplate the ſupreme Being directing the Diſſolution, as he directed the original Formation, of the World. He is the great Agent in this wonderful Tranſaction. It was by him fore-ſeen. It was by him intended; it entered into his Plan, from the Moment of Creation. This World was deſtined from the Beginning to fulfill a certain Period; & then its Duration was to terminate. Not that it is any Pleaſure to the Almighty, to diſplay his Omnipotence in deſtroying the Works which he has made; but as for wiſe and good Purpoſes the Earth was formed; ſo for wiſe and good Ends it will be diſſolved, when the Time moſt proper for its Termination ſhall come.

He, who in the Counſels of his Providence, brings about ſo many Revolutions among Mankind; who "changes the Times and the Seaſons;" who raiſes up Empires to rule, in Succeſſion, among the Nations, & at his Pleaſure puts an End to their Glory; hath alſo fixed a Term for the Earth itſelf, the Seat of all human Greatneſs. He ſaw it meet, that after the probationary Courſe was finiſhed, which the Generations of Men were to accompliſh, their preſent Habitation ſhould be made to paſs away.

Of the Seaſonableneſs of the Period, when this Change ſhould take-place, no Being can judge, except the Lord of the Univerſe. Theſe are Counſels, into which it is not ours to penetrate.

The Jews have, indeed, a Tradition, (1) that the

(1) From Elias, not the Prophet of that Name, but a learned Jewiſh Rabbi, known by the Name of Elias Levita. At what particular Time he flouriſhed, is uncertain, but moſt probably ſome conſiderable Time before our Saviour, under the ſecond Temple. His Words are theſe, "The Duration of the World will be ſix thouſand Years: "two thouſand Years in a State of Diſorder; two thouſand Years "under the Law, & two thouſand under the Meſſiah." Several Teſtimonies to the ſame Effect may be met with in their Gemara, or Gloſs of the Talmud. Certain it is that this Opinion was well-known, and thought favourably of, in the early Days of Chriſtianity. For thus Irnæus, "As many Days as the World was in Creating, juſt ſo many "thouſands of Years ſhall it endure." To the ſame Purpoſe Cyprian, "The ſix firſt Days point out or tipify ſo many thouſands of Years." So Lactantius; "Seeing that in ſix Days God completed all his Works; "for ſix Ages, (i.e) ſix thouſand Years muſt the World continue in "this State; The great Day of the Lord is equivalent to a Cycle of a "thouſand Years." And laſtly, Juſtin Martyr, "I am perſuaded that "That Paſſage of the Apoſtle, *A Day of the Lord is as a thouſand Years*, "is thus applied."

What if we ſhould ſay that the great Miſtake concerning the Proximity of the Day of Judgment, with which the primitive Chriſtians ſtand ſo generally charged, had its Foundation in this Opinion; the thing is far from being improbable, ſeeing that the Chronology of the Septuagint was then almoſt univerſally followed; few, at that Time, thro Ignorance of the ſacred Languages, knowing of any other Computation. This Account is known to exceed the Hebrew, (by which we compute,)

the Duration of this World is to be juſt SIX THOUSAND YEARS. An Hypotheſis apparently backed by very ſpecious and probable Reaſons; and tho' it may ſeem contradictory to the Aſſertion of a general Ignorance in this Matter, yet may it be ſtrictly true, & Mankind remain as abſolutely in the Dark reſpecting it, as if no ſuch thing had ever been thought of. For, there ſeems a Kind of providential Diſagreement among Chronologers (1) concerning the Age of the

pute,) ſo much, (upwards, I think, of thirteen hundred Years,) that Sulp. Severus might well begin his Hiſtory with obſerving that "the "World was created THEN almoſt ſix thouſand Years ago."

This Suppoſition certainly throws a conſiderable Light upon a Matter, which cannot, we think, be otherwiſe ſo well accounted for.

(1) There is not perhaps, in the whole Circle of Learning, ſo intricate and perplexed a Point as this of Chronology; there are ſcarce fewer different Accounts than there are Writers upon the Subject; the Greek, Roman, Alexandrian, Jewiſh, &c. Epochas vary from each other almoſt incredibly; even the Hebrew and Samaritan Copies of the Pentateuch differ greatly in this Reſpect, the latter, beſides frequent Variations in Particulars, exceeding the former upon the whole, no leſs than three hundred and eleven Years: The Greek Tranſlation of the LXX ſtill out-goes them both to an unreaſonable Length, eſpecially in the Accounts of the firſt Generations, which might not improbably be a wilful Variation from the Original, in Order to make them reach the pretended Antiquity of the Egyptians, amongſt whom theſe Tranſlators were then reſident.

The Year of Epocha of the Creation or Age of the World in this preſent Year 1797, is, according to the Jews, 5556; by Scaliger's Ac-

the World; and, as it were, on Purpoſe to conceal the true Date of it. The Fautors of each Opinion, proceed but upon Conjecture, and are far from being themſelves ſatisfied of their being in the Right; and We, not knowing which to follow, may be caught by it to Morrow, when we imagine it two or three hundred Years off; or ſleep out a Century or two in the Earth before the Bridegroom's Arrival, which

count, 5767; and Arch-Bp. Uſher's, 5811: upon the Plans of the Septuagint, Samaritan & Euſebian Computations, ſtill more; in ſhort, ſcarce any two concur. — The Millenarian Writers have been mighty earneſt in their Endeavours to ſettle this Point, but their great Anxiety to have the wiſhed-for Period to coincide with their own Times, has ever miſled them: and their Determinations in this Matter, tho' perhaps the ſole Article which can be objected to in many of them, have doubtleſs been of great Diſſervice to the Doctrine.

Mr. Whiſton, after having lived to ſee himſelf twice miſtaken, at laſt fixed upon the Year 1776, or thereabouts, for the Period of this World, or at leaſt the preſent State of things: in which, we, of latter Days, find he was equally miſtaken, as in his former Calculations.

I cannot cloſe this Remark better than by obſerving, that the thing I aim at, in repreſenting theſe Differences, (in Point of Chronology) and would propoſe to the Conſideration of the pious, ſober and judicious, and with due Reverence to the Word of God, is, whether there may not be ſome ſecret Diſpoſition of Divine Providence in this Variety of Computations to prevent our Curioſity in counting the exact Time of the End of the World, and the ſecond Appearing of Chriſt to the Day of Judgment; and that as the ambitious Tower of Babel was hindered by the Confuſion of Languages, ſo our Curioſity in this Particular, be not, by a like Providence, prevented by ſuch Diverſity of Computations.

which we conceit to be every Hour. But,

Amidſt this great Revolution of Nature, our Comfort is, that it is a Revolution brought about by Him, the Meaſures of whoſe Government are all founded in Goodneſs.

It is called "The Day of the Lord;" a Day peculiarly HIS, as known to him only; - a Day in which he ſhall appear with uncommon and tremendous Majeſty. But, tho' it be the Day of "the Terrors of the Lord;" yet from theſe Terrors, his upright and faithful Subjects ſhall have nothing to apprehend. They may remain ſafe and quiet Spectators of the threatning Scene: for, it is not to be a Scene of blind Confuſion; of univerſal Ruin, brought about by undeſigning Chance. No, Over the Shock of the Elements, and the Wreck of Nature, Eternal Wiſdom preſides. According to its Direction, the Conflagration advances which is to conſume the Earth. Amidſt every Convulſion of the World, God ſhall continue to be, as he was from the Beginning, "the Dwelling-Place of his Servants to all Generations." The World may be loſt to them; but the Ruler of the World is ever the ſame, unchangeably good and juſt. Under every Period of his Government, "his Countenance will behold the Upright." But,

Secondly, Let us contemplate the Diſſolution

of the World, as the End of all HUMAN Glory.

This Earth has been the Theatre of many a great Spectacle, and many high Atchievements. There, the Wiſe have ruled, the Mighty have fought, and Conquerors have triumphed. Its Surface has been covered with proud and ſtately Cities. Its Temples and Palaces have raiſed their Heads on high. Kings and Potentates, glorying in their Magnificence, have erected Pyramids, conſtructed Towers, founded Monuments, which they imagined "were to continue forever, and their Dwelling-Places to all Generations." Its Philoſophers have explored the Secrets of Nature; and flattered themſelves, that the Fame of their Diſcoveries was to be immortal. (1) Alaſs! All This was no more than to be a tranſient

(1) Fame after Death is but an indifferent thing for a Chriſtian to trouble himſelf about: The Heathens, indeed, were fond of it, becauſe they found within themſelves an impetuous Deſire of Immortality, and could find no other Way to effect it, but only by This. But, for us Chriſtians to deſpiſe the Joys of Paradiſe for the Clattering of vain Tongues, is an unpardonable Affront offered to our Religion; it is a worſe Indignity put upon God, than the Iſraelites' longing for Garlick and Onions, when they fed upon the Food of Angels.

Of what Good Fame is after Death, we may illuſtrate in the moſt famous Man of all Antiquity, Ariſtotle.

As for Alexander and Cæſar, we muſt look upon them to be infamouſly ſo, (far beneath that Wretch who burnt the Epheſian Temple to make himſelf memorable;) two barbarous Butchers of Mankind,

traſical Show; for, not only "the Faſhion of the World,"

that murdered ſo many innocent People to ſacrifice to their Ambition.

A wiſe Man, that lives up to the Principles of Reaſon and Virtue, if we conſider him in his Solitude, (as taken in the Syſtem of the Univerſe,) obſerving the mutual Dependance and Harmony, by which the whole Frame of it hangs together, raiſing his Thoughts with magnificent Ideas of Providence; makes a nobler Figure in the Eye of an intelligent Being, than the greateſt Conqueror amidſt all the Pomps and Solemnities of a Triumph.

Ariſtotle, that had the moſt univerſal Genius of all the Sons of Adam; that brought Philoſophy into ſome Method & Intelligibleneſs, which was Cant and Jargon before; that was, (we may ſay,) the Inventor of Logick, that great Pillar of Reaſon; that was ſo admirable a Critick in Poetry, that both Epick and Lyrick, as well as Dramaticks, will ſtand obliged to him forever; that gave the moſt admirable Rules in Rhetorick, which ever the World had, or probably ever will have; that wrote ſuch a Syſtem of Morality, that was never equalled until the Sermon on the Mount; whoſe Phyſiology was better than the reſt of his Time, and will ſtill be in Reputation and Requeſt, when Carteſius, &c. ſhall not perhaps be heard of; whoſe Heterodoxies in Divinity are better defended than other Men's Truths; whoſe Books have been read ten thouſand Times over, and as many Volumes of Comments wrote or printed upon them; who was almoſt the only Study of learned Men for many Ages; whoſe Aſſentions are taken in moſt Controverſies as undoubted Axioms, and are defended every Day in the moſt famous Schools of Europe.

Ariſtotle, that has all this Fame entailed on him, can receive no Benefit after Death. If he be happy, he has ſomething elſe to buſie his Thoughts about; or if he be miſerable, it will not relieve him; if he has ceaſed to be, he knows nothing of it now, & before his Death he could never have expected it: ſo that, in Short, as to all the Good his Fame can have done this great Philoſopher ſince Death, he had e-

World," but the World itſelf, "paſſeth away."

The Day cometh, when all the Glory of this World ſhall be remembered only "as a Dream when one awaketh." No longer ſhall the Earth exhibit any of thoſe Scenes which now delight our Eyes, for the whole beautiful Fabrick will be thrown down, never more to ariſe. — As ſoon as the deſtroying Angel has ſounded the laſt Trumpet, the everlaſting Mountains fall; - the Foundations of the World are ſhaken; - the Beauties of Nature, - the Decorations of Art, - the Labours of Induſtry, periſh in one common Flame. - "The Cloud-capt Towers, - The "gorgeous Palaces — The great Globe itſelf, with "all it doth inherit, ſhall diſſolve; and like the "baſeleſs Fabrick of a Viſion, leave not a Wreck behind."

ven as good have been One of the innumerable Multitude of Others, of leſs eminent Merit, for whom we are beholding to other Authors that we know any thing of them. But,

"The Heart of vain Man is troubled beyond Meaſure; his Cares are greater than his Pleaſures. His Solicitude cannot reſt with his Bones, the Grave is not deep enough to hide it: he extendeth his Thoughts beyond his Being; he beſpeaketh Praiſe to be paid when he is gone: but whoſo promiſeth it, deceiveth him.

"As a Man who engageth his Wife to remain in Widowhood that he diſturb not his Soul; ſo is he who expecteth that Praiſe ſhall reach his Ears beneath the Earth, or cheriſh his Heart in the Duſt.

"Do well whilſt thou liveſt; but regard not what is ſaid of it. Content thyſelf with deſerving Praiſe, and thy Poſterity ſhall rejoice in hearing it."

"behind." (1) — The Globe itſelf ſhall either return into its ancient Chaos, "without Form, and Void." - Or, like a Star fallen from the Heavens, ſhall be effaced from the Univerſe, and "its Place ſhall know it no more." But further,

This Day will be ſudden and unexpected. - Mankind, (notwithſtanding the Preſages given them,) ſhall continue, to the laſt, in their wonted Security. "As in the Days of Noah, before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in Marriage, untill the Flood came, and took them all away; ſo, (as our Saviour tells us,) ſhall alſo the Coming of the Son of Man be."

Let us caſt our View forward to that awful Period, when "there ſhall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth Diſtreſs of Nations, with Perplexity; the Sea and the Waves roaring; Men's Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe things, which are coming on the Earth; for the Powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken," and think what Thoughts will then be uppermoſt with us;

How many Projects and Deſigns ſhall that Day ſuddenly confound? - What long-contriv'd Schemes of Pleaſure ſhall it overthrow? - What Plans of Cunning

(1) See the latter Part of No. 146 of the Spectator.

ning and Ambition ſhall it utterly blaſt? — How miſerable they whom it ſhall overtake in the midſt of dark Conſpiracies, of criminal Deeds, or profligate Pleaſures? — In what ſtrong Colours is their Diſmay painted, when they are repreſented in the Book of Revelations, as "calling to the Hills & Mountains to fall on them and cover them?"

Such Deſcriptions are apt to be conſidered as exaggerated. - The Impreſſion of thoſe awful Events is weakened by the Diſtance of Time, at which our Imagination places them; but have we not had a ſtriking Image ſet before us, in our own Age, of the Terrors which the Day of the Lord ſhall produce, by thoſe partial Ruins of the World, which the Viſitation of God has brought on Countries well known, and not very far removed from ourſelves? (1) When in the midſt

(1) Alluding to the dreadful Earthquake at Liſbon, in 1755. which laſted for ſix Minutes, the Houſes ſhaking in ſuch a Manner, that the People could not keep upon their Legs, all aſking for Pardon & Mercy, the Friars in all the Convents in the Streets giving Benedictions to the People, all in Tears, expecting inſtant Death.— An Hour after, on a Sudden the Sea ſwelled up, without the leaſt Wind, all round the City, carrying all before it. This terrible Scene laſted two Hours.

Surely none, but ſuch as deny either the Being of God, or his univerſal Providence, will cenſure it, as either irrational or ſuperſtitious, to introduce the divine Agency and Power, as concerned in the Production of ſuch tremendous Events, tho' they may ſometimes hap-

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midſt of Security, ſuddenly the Earth was felt by the terrified Inhabitants to tremble, with violent Agitation

pen according to the eſtabliſhed Laws of Nature: becauſe theſe Laws themſelves ſhould be conſidered as originally fixed by God, and the Effects, reſulting from them, as taking-place, when & where He pleaſes, by Virtue of his original Appointment. Thus, tho' the various Seaſons of the Year, "Seed-Time and Harveſt, Summer & Winter," ſucceed each other by the ſtated Revolutions of our Earth round the Sun; yet who, that believes a God and his Providence, doth not conſider theſe common Events, as owing to an original divine Diſpoſition, and the conſtant Influence of his almighty Power on the material Syſtem. It muſt, therefore, ſurely, be conſiſtent with the genuine Dictates of Reaſon to aſcribe theſe aſtoniſhing Effects to the Hand of that Omnipotent Being who ſpake this Globe into Exiſtence. And, it ſhould be remembered, that the moſt civilized Nations have always looked upon theſe uncommon Effects, that happen in the Courſe of Providence, which are in their own Nature aſtoniſhing, that create an inward Terror, and are often attended with the moſt dreadful Calamities, as the ſignal Marks of the divine Diſpleaſure, & the awful Puniſhment of his Juſtice for the Impieties and Vices of Mankind.

That Earthquakes are very awful and terrifying in their Nature, none, ſurely, will deny. Can we help being aſtoniſhed, when we find the Ground we tread on, and from which we ſcarcely expect any fatal Evil, in a convulſive Motion; our Houſes tottering round us, & threatning every Moment to bury us in their Ruins? Can we behold, without Horror, the moſt ſtately Structures tumbling from their Baſes, the Mountains rending and falling into Ruins, the Earth itſelf either ſo widely gaping, or violently agitated, as to prevent our Flight from the Horrors that ſurround us? And,

Can any reaſonable Perſon, who ſeriouſly reflects on theſe things, doubt a Moment of their being evident Marks of the divine Diſpleaſure,

tion below them, when their Houſes began to ſhake over their Heads, & to overwhelm them with Ruins; the ſure, and Indications of his Anger for the repeated Impieties and Iniquities of Mankind? What can be a ſurer Proof of the divine Diſpleaſure, than a Shake that threatens the entire Subverſion of a City in a Moment? Even thoſe Succuſſions that are moſt favourable, and are attended with no immediate and ſudden Deſolation, no Man looks upon as deſirable things; he conſiders them, indeed, as Indications of a propitious Deity, but reflects on them with Pleaſure on no other Account, than his having eſcaped the inſtantaneous Ruin, with which they threatened him. — And, if they are conſidered as effected, either mediately or immediately, by the Hand of the Divine Being, it is impoſſible to regard them in any other Light, than as the Shakings of his Rod, the friendly Warnings of his Providence, & ſerious Calls to Reformation, to prevent more fatal Conſequences. But how much more dreadful Proofs of the Anger of the almighty Maker of the Univerſe are thoſe Agitations of the Earth that are repeated and violent, that ſpread univerſal Devaſtation among the Dwellings and Inhabitants of the Earth, When they level the wealthy and ſtately Cities from their Foundations, and ſwallow up thouſands of the miſerable Inhabitants, without a Poſſibility of their eſcaping the Danger, or allowing them Time for one ſerious Thought, or breathing out a ſingle Prayer for Mercy? —— Read the 16th Chapter of Numbers.

But tho it ſhould not be denied, that Earthquakes are intended as Denunciations of divine Anger; yet, ſome, perhaps, may pretend, that as theſe fatal Convulſions of Nature do not extend to theſe Kingdoms, ſo generally; they cannot be looked upon as Warnings to them.

But ſurely, ſuch a Pretence as this does not merit an Anſwer; for If they are intended as Marks of the divine Diſpleaſure, they are certainly ſuch to all the Inhabitants of this terraqueous Globe. Beſides, we have felt, tho in a much leſs Degree, thoſe Terrors: Hath not our Metropolis been ſhaken alſo? And who can tell whether a more fatal One may not ſoon ſucceed, and overwhelm us with a ſudden Deſtruc-

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the Flood, at the ſame Time, to riſe from its Bed, and to ſwell around them; when incompaſſed with univerſal Deſolation, no Friend could aid another; no Proſpect of Eſcape appeared; no Place of Refuge remained: How ſimilar were ſuch Scenes of Deſtruction to the Terrors of the laſt Day? what ſimilar Senſations of Dread, and Remorſe, and too late Repentance, muſt they have excited, among the guilty and profane? when like a diſturbed Hive, all was in Confuſion.

What a dreadful Convulſion of Nature was This! How terrible muſt be the Conſternation of thoſe unhappy Mortals, who felt its Effects! The Survivors appearing as if ariſen from the Dead.

To ſuch formidable Convulſions of Nature, we, in theſe happy Iſlands, thro' the Bleſſing of Heaven, are

on? A dreadful Vault may, for aught we know, be juſt under our habitations, & Nature, by long and gradual Preparations, have almoſt opened her Materials to force it open.

Some have looked upon Earthquakes as ſignal Judgments inflicted on the Inhabitants. But they, who reaſon in this Manner, miſtake their Duty, by pretending to dive into the Council of the Moſt-High, and paſs Judgment on the Diſpenſations of his Providence towards the Works of his own Hands. For our Saviour himſelf has particularly told us, that their Suffering ſuch dreadful Calamities here, are not Marks of their being Sinners above thoſe whom Providence has ſpared; and that, "except we repent, we ſhall all likewiſe perish."

are Strangers; and Strangers to them may we long continue! But however we may eſcape partial Ruins of the Globe, in its general and final Ruin, we muſt all be involved. To us muſt come, at laſt, that awful Day, when the Sun ſhall for the laſt Time ariſe, to perform his concluding Circuit round the World. And! They how bleſt, whom that Day ſhall find employed in religious Acts, or virtuous Deeds; in the conſcientious Diſcharge of the Duties of Life; in the Exerciſe of due Preparation for the Concluſion of human things, and for appearing before the great Judge of the World!

To a Nation immerſed in Luxury, every Manifeſtation of the Power of the Almighty ought to awaken us from our fatal Security, and prompt us to omit no Time in reconciling ourſelves to that tremendous Judge, before whom we muſt ſhortly appear. And then, under all the Events and Terrors of this Kind, how ſure a Refuge have we to fly to, and how ſafely and chearfully may we commit ourſelves to the Protection of his Power and Goodneſs! Protected by him, we ſhall ſtand firm and unſhaken when the Earth and Sea are blended, the Order of the World yields to Confuſion, and the Wreck and Ruin of Nature approaches.

This is the certain & neceſſary Tendency of true Religio

Religion. "We ſhall not fear, though the Earth be removed," is the Language of Piety, when the Principles of it have full Poſſeſſion of the Heart, and its Precepts wholly direct the Practice.

The religious Man, indeed, cannot but ſtand in Awe of the Almighty, when he ſhakes the ſolid Globe, and ſeriouſly lay it to Heart, when he gives any Warnings of his Diſpleaſure; yet this Awe is quite different from that mean and abject Timidity, with which others are affected. It is not that Conſternation which diſheartens and confounds them; that operates only in quickening their Speed, & haſtening their Flight from the ſuppoſed Scene of Danger, & the Places they imagine may be more affected by it. Vain Refuge to think of fleeing, where God cannot follow them; or that Change of Place, or Habitation, can be any Shelter to them, if He purſues them to their Deſtruction! Vain, eſpecially in Dangers of this Kind, becauſe the Shock that hath been felt in one Place, may, on a Repetition, be felt in another, and produce more dreadful Effects in the Place where we promiſed ourſelves the moſt effectual Security. Even our very Flight may prove fatal to us, or we may meet with Death from other Cauſes, though we ſhould eſcape from the Effects of the Concuſſion.

The Fear that affects the religious Man, produces very different Effects; it cauſes him to correct more entirely his Errors, to attend more diligently to the Duties of his Station, to become more eminently uſeful, to be more earneſt in Prayer with the Almighty for himſelf, and the Nation of which he is a Member, that the Threatenings of his Providence may have their kindly Effects to bring Sinners to Repentance, & produce that Reformation which is neceſſary to avert the divine Diſpleaſure, and to prolong and eſtabliſh the public Security; and which, if it takes-place in any conſiderable Degree, may diſarm the Anger of Omnipotence, and cauſe him to return with multiplied Bleſſings to the very City and People, he threatened with an entire Subverſion and Deſolation.

As to himſelf, the Man of Virtue and Principle knows, that God is his Refuge and Fortreſs, that he hath wiſely provided againſt all the moſt formidable Evils of his Nature, by having "fled for Refuge to lay hold of the Hope that is ſet before him," and embraced the Promiſes of God. And, though his Awe of the Almighty remains, his Terrors vaniſh, and he hath no diſponding Fears to oppreſs him. He gives up nothing for loſt, whilſt Nature and the Government of the World are in the Hands of God

God; nor deſpair of better Times, ſince that Almighty Being can make the very Judgments he executes, the Means of introducing and eſtabliſhing them. Should he be miſtaken in this pleaſing Proſpect, ſhould he ſee the Deſolation of his Country, the Subverſion of its Cities, and the Deſtruction of their Inhabitants; ſhould he feel the Convulſions of a rocking World, ſhould he behold the Mountains ſinking into Ruins, the ſtormy Ocean pouring out all its Waves to overwhelm and level them, the Vault of Heaven rending with Thunder, the ruddy Lightning darting impetous from one End of it to the other, carrying ſwift and irreſiſtible Deſtruction under its Wings, and the Elements all on Fire, melting with fervent Heat: Should he be a Witneſs of theſe tremendous Events, find himſelf ſurrounded with theſe multiplied Terrors, and ready to bear his Part in this univerſal Subverſion of Nature, he would calmly ſmile at the Terrors preſented to him, ſink fearleſs and reſolute under theſe complicated Ruins; and in his laſt Moments rejoice in the ſure Proſpect that he ſhould finally ſurvive them, & be reſtored to a State of the moſt durable Felicity, when Time and this World ſhall be no more, and neither Fate nor Chance, nor what is of infinitely more Conſequence, the Anger of the Almighty, ſhall ever introduce a

ſecond Deſtruction.—Let us now, therefore,

3dly, Contemplate the Soul of Man as remaining unhurt in the midſt of this General Deſolation, when the whole animal Creation periſhes, and the whole Frame of Nature falls into Ruins.

What an high Idea does This preſent, of the Dignity pertaining to the rational Spirit! The World may fall back into Chaos; but, ſuperior to Matter, and independent of all the Changes of material things, the Soul continues the ſame. "When the Heavens ſhall paſs-away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat," the Soul of Man, ſtamped for Immortality, will retain its State unimpaired, and be capable of flouriſhing in undecaying Youth and Vigour.

Very different, indeed, the Condition of human Spirits, will be, according as their different Qualities have marked and prepared them, for different future Manſions. But, for Futurity, they are all deſtined. Exiſtence, ſtill, is theirs. The Capacity of permanent Felicity, they all poſſeſs; and if they enjoy it not, it is owing to themſelves.

Here then, let us behold what is the true Honour and Excellency of Man. It conſiſts not in his Body; which, beautiful or vigorous as it may now

ſeem,

ſeem, is no other than a Fabrick of Duſt, quickly to return to Duſt again. It is not derived from any Connection he can form with earthly things, which (as we have ſeen,) are all doomed to periſh. It conſiſts in that THINKING Part, which is ſuſceptible of intellectual Improvement and moral Worth; which was formed after the Image of God; which is capable of perpetual Progreſs in drawing nearer to HIS Nature; and ſhall partake of the divine Eternity, when Time and the World ſhall be no more.

This is all that is really reſpectable in Man. By this alone he is raiſed above periſhable Subſtances, and allied to thoſe that are celeſtial and immortal. This Part of our Nature, then, let us cultivate with Care; and, on its Improvement, reſt our Self-Eſtimation.

If, on the contrary, ſuffering ourſelves to be wholly immerſed in Matter, plunged in the Dregs of Senſuality, behaving as if we were made only for the Body and its animal Pleaſures, how degenerate and baſe do we become?

Deſtined to ſurvive this whole material Syſtem, ſent forth to run the Race of Immortality and Glory, ſhall we thus abuſe our Maker's Goodneſs, degrade our original Honour, and ſink ourſelves into deſerved Miſery? — It remains, therefore,

4thly, That we contemplate the Diſſolution of the World, as the Introduction to a greater and nobler Syſtem, in the Government of God. "We, (according to his Promiſe,) look for NEW Heavens, and a NEW Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs."

Temporal things are now to give-place to things eternal. To this earthly Habitation is to ſucceed the City of the living God. The Earth had completed the Purpoſe for which it was made. It had been employed as a Theatre, on which the human Generations were ſucceſſively to come-forth, and to fulfil their Term of Trial. As long as the Period of Trial continued, much Obſcurity was, of Courſe, to cover the Counſels of Providence. It was appointed that "all things" ſhould appear as "coming alike to all;" that the Righteous ſhould ſeem often neglected by Heaven, and the Wicked to be allowed externally to proſper, in Order that Virtue and Piety might undergo a proper Teſt; that it might be ſhown who were ſincere Adherents to Conſcience, and who were mere Followers of Fortune.

The Day which terminates the Duration of the World, terminates all thoſe ſeeming Diſorders. The Time of Trial is concluded, the final Diſcrimination of Characters is made. When the Righteous go to everlaſting Happineſs, & the Wicked are diſmiſſed into

into the Regions of Puniſhment, the whole Myſtery of human Affairs is unravelled, and the Conduct of Providence is juſtified to Man.

Suited to a Condition of Trial was the State and Form of the World, which we now inhabit. It was not deſigned to be a Manſion for innocent and happy Spirits; but a Dwelling for Creatures of fallen Nature, and of mixed Characters. Hence, thoſe Mixtures of Pleaſure and Pain, of Diſorder and Beauty, with which it abounds. Hence, ſome Regions of the Earth, preſenting gay and pleaſing Scenes; others exhibiting nothing but Ruggedneſs and Deformity; the Face of Nature; ſometimes brightened by a ſerene Atmoſphere, and a ſplendid Sun; ſometimes diſfigured by jarring Elements, and overcaſt by troubled Skies. But,

Far unlike ſhall be the everlaſting Habitations of the Juſt; Tho' how they are formed, or what Objects they contain, is not given us now to conceive; nor, in all Probability, would our Faculties be equal to the Conception. The emblematical Deſcriptions of them in Scripture, are calculated to excite high Ideas of Magnificence and Glory - and we may be ſure that our Expectations will not be baulked. This one Particular we know with Certainty, that "therein dwelleth Righteouſneſs" (i.e) complete

Virtue and eternal Order; and where-ever Theſe are found, the moſt perfect Sources are opened of Joy and Bliſs. This Earth was never intended for more than the Outer-Court, the Porch, thro which the Righteous were to paſs into the Temple and Sanctuary of the Divinity. "When that which is Perfect is come, then that which is in Part ſhall be done away."

The Inference which follows from what has been ſaid on this Subject, cannot be ſo well expreſſed as in the Words of the Apoſtle, in the Verſe before us, "Seeing that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what Manner of Perſons ought we to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs?"

Ought not the important Diſcoveries which have been made to us, of the Deſigns of the Almighty, and of the Deſtiny of Man, to exalt our Sentiments, and to purify our Life from what is vitious or vain? While we purſue the Buſineſs and Cares of our preſent Station, and partake of the innocent Pleaſures which the World affords, let us maintain that Dignity of Character, which becomes immortal Beings; let us act with that Circumſpection, which becomes thoſe who know they are ſoon to ſtand before the Judgement-Seat of the Son of God: In a Word, let us ſtudy to be what we would wiſh to be found, if

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to us the Day of the Lord ſhould come; at leaſt, a Day equal to it, as carrying with it the ſame Effects, the Day of Death, will attend us all; which cannot be far from any of us.

I cannot conclude without calling your Thoughts to the magnificent View, which theſe Events give us, of the Kingdom and Dominion of the Almighty.

With Reverence we contemplate his Hand in the ſignal Diſpenſations of Providence among Men; deciding the Fate of Battles; raiſing up, or overthrowing Empires; caſting down the Proud, and lifting the Low from the Duſt - making the Earth to tremble before him. "When his Judgements are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs." But, what are ſuch Occurrences to the Power and Wiſdom, which he diſplays in the higher Revolutions of the Univerſe; by his Word forming, or diſſolving Worlds; at his Pleaſure tranſplanting his Creatures from one World to another; that he may carry-on NEW Plans of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, filling all Space with the Wonders of Creation!

Succeſſive Generations of Men have ariſen to poſſeſs the Earth. By Turns they have paſſed away, and gone into Regions unknown. Us hath he raiſed up, to occupy their Room. We too ſhall ſhortly

diſappear. But human Exiſtence never periſhes. Life only changes its Form, and is renewed. Creation is ever filling, but never full.

When the whole intended Courſe of the Generations of Men ſhall be finiſhed, then, as a Shepherd leads his Flock from one Paſture to another, ſo the great Creator leads forth the Souls which he has made, into new and prepared Abodes of Life. They go from this Earth to a NEW Earth, and a NEW Heaven, from one Province of the Divine Dominion to another. But.

Amidſt all theſe Changes of Nature, the great Ruler himſelf remains, "without Variableneſs or Shadow of Turning." To him, theſe ſucceſſive Revolutions of Being "are but as Yeſterday when it is paſt." From his eternal Throne, he beholds Worlds riſing and paſſing away; meaſures out, to the Creatures who inhabit them, Powers and Faculties ſuited to their State; and diſtributes among them Rewards and Puniſhments, proportioned to their Actions.

What an aſtoniſhing View do ſuch Meditations afford of the Kingdom of God; infinite in its Extent, everlaſting in its Duration; exhibiting, in every Period, the Reign of perfect Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom! "Who by ſearching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to Perfection?" Great &

marvelous

marvelous are thy Works, Lord God, Almighty! Juſt and true are all thy Ways, Thou King of Saints!"

Sermon

SERMON LXXIX.

On Death.

Heb. ix. 27.
"It is appointed unto Men once to die."

It may occur, perhaps, that the Proſpect of the final End of all things (the Events of which have been already treated (1) cannot be expected to have much Influence on the preſent Age, belonging rather to ſome future Race of Men, as many Prophecies yet remain to be fulfilled; and many preparatory Forms to take-place, before the World is ripe for final Judgement.

Whether This be the Caſe or not, none of us can with Certainty know: Allow me therefore, to remind you, that to each of us, an Event is approaching, & not far diſtant, which ſhall prove of the ſame Effect, with the Coming of the Lord, in the Cloud of Heaven, at the Laſt-Day. The Day of Death is to every Individual, the ſame as the Day of the Diſ-ſolution

(1) The preceeding Diſcourſe.

ſolution of the World. The Sun may continue to ſhine; but to them who are laid in the Grave, his Light is finally extinguiſhed. The World may remain active & buſy, but to them all is Silence. The Voice which gives the Mandate, "Return again to your Duſt," is the ſame with the Sound of the laſt Trumpet. Death fixes the Doom of every one, finally and irrevocably. This ſurely is an Event which none of us can remove in our Thoughts to a remote Age. To Morrow, - To-Day, the fatal Mandate may be iſſued; "and then all our Thoughts periſh."

Amongſt the Variety of Subjects, therefore, addreſſed to a Chriſtian Audience; who are, (as all Men,) in their Natures, ſubject to Decay, that which inculcates to them their Frailty, and Certainty of Diſſolution, with ſuitable Reflections on it, may not be reckoned one of the leaſt neceſſary. Accordingly,

This Subject, ſo uſeful to our Meditations, is, in the ſtrongeſt Terms here laid before us, in poſitive Aſſurance of its Certainty to us. "It is appointed unto Men, once to die."

The Approach of Death is ſure and certain, tho the preciſe Time of it, to each of us, is to us unknown. It is, indeed, a Matter of univerſal Obſervation, and

of almoſt univerſal Complaint: but our Misfortune is, that while we all acknowledge this in general, each one neglects to bring-home the important, but unwelcome Truth in particular; as tho' we had literally "made a Covenant with Death, and were at an Agreement with the Grave." Strange Infatuation! and not to be exceeded or equalled by any other, but by that of acknowledging it in Theory, and yet denying it in Practice, (i.e) by neglecting to make the only proper Proviſion againſt it.

The Words, then, before us, (in due Proceſs,) naturally lead us to treat on the Certainty of Death, and a due Preparation for it.

A Subject, indeed, ſuppoſed to be ſo generally underſtood, as to need to be but ſparingly inculcated by the Preacher; or, however, but ſlightly attended to by the Hearer: — But a Subject withal, in itſelf, of the laſt Importance to Both, and not the leſs ſo on account of the acknowledged Certainty of it.

It is certainly, of all things that concern us, the moſt neceſſary to be attended to. But what can be ſaid to excite Attention to Truths ſo known and familiar, that no One ever doubted of them? Who wants be told that the riſing Sun will ſet; "that all Fleſh is Graſs, and all the Goodlineſs thereof as the Flower of the Field?" Who can bear be taught with an Air of Wiſdom what every one has already learned? Certainly ſo. But if however this be true,

I had almoſt ſaid, ſo univerſally,) prevail, that we engage in a Subject, the Premiſes and Concluſions of which, are already ſo generally allowed and acknowledged by all. (*)

As to the Certainty of Death, it is a Decree ſentenced on ALL Men, the Conſequence of Tranſgreſſion.

At the firſt Creation of the World, "God formed Man out of the Earth, and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul." He then gave him a Commandment, on the Obſervance of which he ſhould live. Man tranſgreſſed, and from thence became liable to Death. Accordingly, (as we read,) God deſcended from above, arraigned the Delinquents, and adjudged them to it; "Duſt thou art, and unto Duſt ſhalt thou return, for out of it waſt thou taken." The Decree is paſt, and is irreverſible. Accordingly, from the moſt ancient Times, from Adam, the firſt of us all, to the preſent Days of our Exiſtence, hath this Decree been fulfilled, and "Death hath paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned." Indeed, not only in us the reaſonable Part of the Creation, but alſo in all things around us, as tho' the Goodneſs of God deſigned that every thing ſhould turn our Monitor in ſo great a Concern, and warn us of our approaching Diſſolution. Every

(*) One probable Reaſon why this Matter is obſerved with ſo little Attention, is, becauſe it is familiar & habituall to us. This Truth was never new to us. We learned it before we were capable of reaſoning or reflecting upon it. It has ever wanted the Force of Novelty and Surprize to attract our Attention; and therefore the Impreſſions it makes on us, unleſs quickened by Reflection or ſome Accidents which point out its Force more directly towards us, are but faint & languid. Our Inattention itſelf grows by Time into a Habit, and becomes, in ſome ſort, natural to us; juſt as the marvellous Works of Creation having

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we muſt take for Truth all the Conſequences that attend it. We may ſee and acknowledge a Fact, & ſhut our Eyes to the Truths that are connected with it. We may aſſent to a general Truth, without inquiring what perſonal Concern we have in it; how far our Intereſts are affected by it; and without making it a Principle of Action or Conduct.

Want of Conſideration, &c. (under)

Want of Conſideration is, in moſt Caſes, a far mo general Hindrance to our Improvement, than Wa of Knowledge. It is not, therefore, either from Preſumption of any Want of Proof in a Matter clear and important, - or Knowledge of the Uſes be deduced from it, - but by Reaſon of the Sollic tations of ſenſual Pleaſures, which do ſo frequently

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(x) One principle reason why men are so little affected with the Consideration of Death, is, that they look upon it as a Thing at a great Distance from them, and which will not happen for many Years to come. Whereas, in Reality, it is not at a Distance from any of us; but is, in Fact, nearer to us than we imagine. Every Day we live, we are one Day nearer to it than we were before. Every Night we go to Bed, we are one Night nearer to it than we were the Night before. Every Time we look upon our Watches, we are one Hour nearer to it than we were the Hour before. Every Time we look upon our Glaſſes, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Clocks, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Watches, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Glaſſes, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Clocks, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Watches, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Glaſſes, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before. Every Time we look upon our Clocks, we are one Minute nearer to it than we were the Minute before.

been always before our Eyes excite no Curioſity: and we often paſs thro Life without reflecting on the infinite Power and Skill which appear in every Part of them. This World of Wonders, which fills the contemplative Mind with Rapture and Aſtoniſhment, is no Spectacle of Admiration or Praiſe to the Multitude, who ſee the Year return; Day and Night, Summer and Winter, Seed-time and Harveſt, ſucceed each other, without lifting up their Hands or their Thoughts to Heaven, and without reading any Footſteps of the eternal Power & Godhead in his Works.

Every dying Year, every declining Day, every drooping Flower, and falling Leaf, are ſo many Emblems of our certain Mortality: & indeed, not only theſe, but the continual Change of our own Bodies alſo makes the unwelcome Application for us; ſince in Deſpight of all the vain Flatteries and perverſe Reaſonings of Fleſh and Blood to the contrary, the unſteady Condition of our human Nature is a moſt ſenſible and ever-preſent Argument, that as "Man comes up like a Flower," ſo he muſt, ſome Way or other, (1) be cut down like it too; for, like theſe, "as ſoon as we were born, we began to draw to our End." (2) Indeed,

If we do but give ourſelves Leave to think at all, we can ſcarce fail of obſerving the curious Frame of our Bodies, how inclinable they are in themſelves to Decay and Diſſolution, how liable to Diſeaſes from within, and Accidents from without, and how numerous thoſe Diſeaſes and Accidents are. Or,

If ſuch Reflections ſhould eſcape us, it is yet ſcarce poſſible for us to continue any Time, in ſuch a World as this, without being continually reminded of the ſame thing, by the thouſands that fall beſide

(1) *Moriendi mille Figuræ. — Plurima Mortis Imago.*
Death hath a thouſand Shapes.

(2) *Naſcentes morimur.*
Una Dies aparit, conficit una Dies.

us, and the ten thousand at our Right Hand, (1) and that we are in Death continually. (2) But,

This Neglect must appear, if possible, still more inexcusable, if it be considered, that our Lives are in God's Hands; and depending not, on what we call, mere Accidents; but on his good Pleasure: "If he takes away our Breath," if he do but cease to give it, "we die, and our mortal Part is turned to Dust."

And! Can we think ourselves in any Degree intitled

(1) Other People's Deaths should be Remembrancers of our own.

(2) The moderate Attention that is paid to Funerals, on Account of their Frequency, seems, in a great Measure, wisely designed by Providence. Were Death a rare and uncommon Object, it would fill the Spectator with a solemn Awe, and stop him short in the midst of his Pleasures, and even chill him with secret Horror. Such Impressions, however, would prove unsuitable to the Nature of our present State. When they became so strong as to render Men unfit for the ordinary Business of Life, they would, in a great Measure, defeat the Intention of our being placed in this World. It is better ordered by the Wisdom of Providence, that they should be weakened by the Frequency of their Recurrence; & so tempered by the Mixutre of other Passions, as to allow us to go on freely in acting our Parts on Earth. Yet,

Familiar as Death is now become, it is undoubtedly fit, that, by an Event of so important a Nature, some Impression should be made upon our Minds. It ought not to pass over, as one of those common Incidents which are beheld without Concern, & awaken no Reflection.

There are many things which the Funerals of our Fellow-Creatures are calculated to teach; and happy it were for the gay and dissipated, if they would listen more frequently to the Instructions of so useful a Monitor.

titled to his Protection, whilſt we voluntarily renounce all Claim to it by repeated Acts of Diſobedience and Sin? Can we preſume upon his Forbearance, when that Forbearance is likely to have no other Effect upon us, than that of giving us both Opportunity & Encouragement to abuſe it? Indeed,

Neither Youth nor Vigour, neither Piety nor Power are a ſufficient Defence againſt this fatal Event. (1) If any human Excellency could get above it; - if the moſt zealous Prayers, and united Wiſhes of good Men could ſuſpend it, we ſhould not have ſo many afflicting Inſtances of Diſtreſs, of Fatherleſs and Widows, deſtitute and helpleſs. (2)

But

(1) "The Old muſt die, but let not Youth delay
"To ſeek Repentance, while 'tis call'd to Day:
"For, 'tis as certain that the Younger may.

"Thou thinkeſt it Folly to be wiſe too ſoon.
"Youth is not rich in Time; it may be poor:
"Part with it as with Money, ſparing: pay
"No Moment but in Purchaſe of its Worth;
"And what its Worth, aſk Death-Beds, they can tell."

(2) *Patrui Exequias nè omninò aſperneres.*
Who grieve too much? What Time ſhall end
Our Mourning for ſo dear a Friend?

Tho' the Stranger and the Unknown fall utterly unnoticed at our Side, yet the Diſſolution of thoſe Ties which had long bound Men together, in intimate and familiar Union, gives a painful Shock to every Heart. When a Family, who, for Years, had been living in Comfort and

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and Peace, are ſuddenly ſhattered, by ſome of the moſt beloved and reſpected Members being torn from them; then is the Time, when the Heart is made to drink of all the Bitterneſs of human Woe.

Amidſt theſe piercing Griefs of the Heart all Ranks of Life are levelled, all Diſtinctions of Fortune are forgotten. Unavailing are the Trophies of ſplendid Woe, with which Riches deck the fatal Couch, to give the leaſt Comfort to the Mourner. The Prince & the Peaſant, then equally feel their own Bitterneſs. Dwelling on the melancholy Remembrance of Joys that are paſt and gone, the One forgets his Poverty; the Other deſpiſes the gilded Trappings of his State. Both in that fatal Hour, are fully ſenſible, that on the Favours of Fortune it depends not to make Man happy in this World.

Here then is the Time to weep: and let not a falſe Idea of Fortitude, or miſtaken Conceptions of religious Duty be employed to reſtrain the burſting Emotion. Let the Heart ſeek its Relief, in the free Effuſion of juſt and natural Sorrow.

Talia Voce refert, —— ——
—— —— —— *Quis talia fando,*
Temperet a Lacrymis? —— ——
Who can repeat ſuch Woes without a Tear?

Curabat unà Funus: triſtis interim; nonnunquàm conlacrymabat. Hæc omnia humani Ingenii, manſuetique Animi Officia.

Chriſtian Grief for our deceaſed Friends is not forbidden in Scripture, but we have Inſtances of it; thus, Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and wept for her. Joſeph made a Mourning for his Father ſeven Days; the Children of Iſrael wept for Moſes thirty Days; David lamented the Death of Saul, Jonathan, and Abner; Chriſt alſo wept over the grave of Lazarus, good Men, who carried Stephen to his Burial, made great Lamentation over him; and the [illegible] for the Loſs of Babylonians [illegible] Apoſtle

ort Time. Serm. LXXIX. As

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Apoſtle Paul grieved for the Sickneſs of Epaphroditus, who was near unto Death; but immoderate Sorrow, and all the extravagant Forms of it, are forbidden, for we are "not to ſorrow, as thoſe who have no Hope."

It is becoming in every one to ſhow, on ſuch Occaſions, that he feels as a Man ought to feel, &c. [illegible]

as a Man ought to feel. At the ſame Time let Moderation temper the Grief of a good Man and a Chriſtian. He muſt not "ſorrow like thoſe that have no Hope." It is true, Nature may have deprived us of what we loved: but ſince She makes us die without our Conſent, why ſhould we take it amiſs that ſhe deſtroys others without our Permiſſion?

Let us conſider our Friends whilſt they live, as Goods we are obliged to part-with when dead, as Goods we were to enjoy but for a ſhort Time.

nobly Great, not even the greateſt or the beſt, can have

As high Elation of Spirits befits not the Joys, ſo continued and overwhelming Dejection ſuits not the Griefs of this tranſitory World. Grief, when it goes beyond certain Bounds, becomes unmanly; when it laſts beyond a certain Time, it is unreaſonable.

In Fruticeto mortuûm nè ſepelias. — See No. 95, of the Spectator.

The Duties of Interment are juſtly called the *laſt* Duties, for beyond the Funeral, all that is given to the Dead, is taking away from the Living. Lamentations that are too long, not only prejudice Nature, but Society likewiſe, as they render us incapable of the Duties of civil Life, when out of Compliſance for thoſe Friends we have loſt, we are wanting to thoſe we ſtill have. The Advice of the Wiſe Man is here very good: "My Son, let Tears fall down over the Dead, and begin to lament: then cover his Body according to Cuſtom, and neglect not his Burial. Weep bitterly and make great Moan, and uſe Lamentation as he is worthy, and that for a Day or two, leſt thou be evil-ſpoken of: and then comfort thyſelf for thy Heavineſs; for of Heavineſs cometh Death. Therefore, take no Heavineſs to Heart, drive it away, and remember the laſt End. Forget it not, for there is no Turning again: thou ſhalt not do him good, but hurt thyſelf. Remember Judgment: for thine alſo ſhall be ſo; Yeſterday for me, & to Day for thee. When the Dead is at reſt, let his Remembrance reſt, and be comforted for him." Let him not reject the Alleviation which Time brings to all the Wounds of the Heart, but ſuffer exceſſive Grief to ſubſide, by Degrees, into a tender affectionate Remembrance. Let him conſider that it is in the Power of Providence to raiſe him up other Comforts in the Place of thoſe he has loſt. Or, if his Mind, at preſent, reject the Thoughts of ſuch Conſolation, let it turn for Reſief to the Proſpect of a future Meeting in a happier World. This is, indeed, the chief Soother of Affliction: the moſt powerful Balm of a bleeding Heart.

The Loſs and Death of Friends is certainly one of the greateſt Griefs and Troubles of human Life; yet the happy State prepared for the Righteous hereafter, and the joyful Hope of meeting pious and be-

love

have any Pretence of Exemption from a Deſtiny which

loved Friends and Relatives in a future State of eternal Happineſs, is an encouraging and reviving Conſideration to alleviate our Grief and Sorrow on their departing from us. If they be fit for God, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was poſſible for them to have been in this World; and the Trouble of their Abſence from us is fully balanced by their being preſent with the Lord. For, why ſhould we lament the End of that Life, which, we are aſſured, is the Beginning of Immortality? It is more Wiſdom to lament the Life of the Wicked, than the Death of the Juſt.

One Reaſon of our Trouble for the Loſs of Friends, is, becauſe we loved them: but it is no Sign of our Love to them to repine at their Happineſs. — But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer: be it ſo; yet why ſhould we be troubled that they are happy ſooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the Thought of this is grievous: but yet the Conſideration of their being parted from us for a while is not near ſo afflicting, as the Hopes of a happy meeting again, never to be parted more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our Love to them was, the leſs ſhould be our Grief for them, when we conſider that they are happy, and that they are ſafe; paſt all Storms, all the Troubles and Temptations of this Life, and out of the Reach of all Harm and Danger for ever.

——— ——— *Nos decebat*
Lugere ubi eſſet aliquis in Lucem editus,
Humanæ Vitæ varia reputantes Mala;
At qui Labores Morte finiſſet graves,
Amicos omnes Laude et Lætitiâ exequi.

When firſt an Infant draws the vital Air,
Officious Grief ſhould welcome him to Care:
But Joy ſhould Life's concluding Scene attend,
And Mirth be kept to grace a dying Friend.

Death, (we ſee,) is no more than a temporary Separation of Friends.

which is inflicted on All without any Exception, or Reſpect

They whom we loved, ſtill live, tho not preſent to us. They are only removed into a different Manſion in the Houſe of our common Father. The Toils of their Pilgrimage are finiſhed; & they are gone to the Land of Reſt and Peace. "There, (in the elegant Expreſſions of Job,) the Wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the Weary are at Reſt. There the Priſoners reſt together; they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor; the ſmall and the great are there, & the Servant is free from his Maſter."

It is remarkable, that in all Languages, and among all Nations, Death hath been deſcribed in a Stile of this Kind, expreſſed by Figures of Speech which convey every where the ſame Idea of Reſt, or Sleep, or Retreat from the Evils of Life, ſuch a Stile perfectly agrees with the general Belief of the Soul's Immortality; but at the ſame Time, aſſuredly conveys no high Idea of the boaſted Pleaſure of the World. It ſhows how much all Mankind have felt this Life to be a Scene of Trouble and Care; and have, therefore, agreed in Opinion, that perfect Reſt is to be expected only in the Grave. But,

Though the Reaſon of our Duty in this Caſe be very plain, yet the Practice of it is very difficult; and when all is ſaid, natural Affection will have its Courſe; and even after our Judgment is ſatisfied, it will require ſome Time to ſtill and quiet our Paſſions. See No. 163 of the Spectator.

Thoſe, then, who are dead, and who "die in the Lord," are gone from this dark and troubled World, to join the great Aſſembly of the Juſt, and to dwell in the midſt of everlaſting Light. In due Time we hope to be aſſociated with them in theſe bleſſed Habitations. Until this Seaſon of Reunion arrive, no Principle of Religion diſcourages our holding Correſpondence of Affection with them by Means of Faith and Hope. Mean-while, let us reſpect the Virtues, and cheriſh the Memory of the Deceaſed. Let their little Failings be now forgotten: Some Foibles, human Nature, in its moſt exalted State, cannot be free from. A Man cannot be perfect as his Maker. — Let us dwell on

what

Reſpect of Perſons : both Old and Young, - High and Low, - Rich and Poor, one with another. (1)

"Let what was amiable in their Character, - imitate their Worth, and trace their Steps". By this Means, the Remembrance of thoſe whom we loved will become uſeful and improving to us, as well as ſacred & dear; "They being dead, yet ſpeak." If we accuſtom ourſelves to conſider them in This Light, as exhorting us to all that is good; if, in trying Situations of Life, where, (as alſo in other Matters,) Wiſdom & Prudence do eſpecially become us, we call up their reſpected Idea to View, and, as placed in their Preſence, think of the Part which we would act before them without a Bluſh. — Moreover,

Let the Remembrance of the Friends whom we have loſt, ſtrengthen our Affection for thoſe that remain. The narrower the Circle becomes of thoſe we love, let us draw the cloſer together. Let the Heart that has been ſoftened by Sorrow, mellow into Gentleneſs and Kindneſs; make liberal Allowance for the Weakneſſes of others, and diveſt itſelf of the little Prejudices that may have formerly poſſeſſed it againſt them. The greater Havock that Death hath made among our Friends here on Earth, let us cultivate Connections more with God, and Heaven, and Virtue. Let thoſe noble Views which Man's immortal Character affords, fill and exalt our Minds. Paſſengers only thro this ſublunary Region, let our Thoughts often aſcend to that divine Country, which we are taught to conſider as the native Seat of the Soul. There we form Connections that are never broken. There we meet with Friends who never die. Among Cœleſtial things there is firm and laſting Conſtancy, while all that is on Earth changes and paſſes away.

Such are ſome of the Fruits we ſhould reap from the tender Feelings excited by the Death of Friends: Fruits of ſufficient Importance to apologize for this long Digreſſion to promote them.

(1) *Si de Divitiis et Honoribus, et Morum Nobilitate jactas, reſpice ipſum, Tu, qui Mortalis es, et in Terram ibis. Circumſpice, qui ſimilibus*

"Let not the Young Man then glorie in his Youth, nor the ſtrong Man in his Strength," for they may all in like Manner die with the Old, and leave their Places for others.

Death has his Arrow, to wound thoſe who are far off, as well as his Scyth, to cut down thoſe who ſtand before him, and who, thro gray Hairs, are "already white for his Harveſt,"

Let none, then, think to exempt themſelves from a Law from which none are exempted, nor think, becauſe they are not as yet arrived to the Age of their Fathers, that therefore they are as yet ſecure: Neither let the Old in Years think, becauſe they have

ſuxêre Splendoribus. Ubi ſunt qui ambiebant Currum Poteſtatis? Ubi ſuperabiles Victores? Ubi ſunt qui Conventus diſponebant, et Faſtæ; et Equorum ſplendidi Nutritores? Ubi nunc Veſtes et Ornamenta peregrina? Ubi Servorum Turba? Ubi Jocus et Lætitia? Ubi Exercituum Duces? Ubi Satrapæ et Tyranni? Nonnè omnia Pulvis et Favilla? Nonnè in paucis Verſibus eorum Vitæ patet Memoria? Reſpice eorum Sepulchra, et vide quis Servus, quis Dominus; quis Dives, quis Pauper; diſcerne, ſi potes, Victum a Rege, fortem a debili; pulchrum a deformi? Eos eſſe felices putato, qui ingentibus Prædiis, qui Magiſtratibus, qui Palatiis fruuntur. Licèt enim alii aliis opulentiores, nobiliores, potentiores, Famâque celebriores ſint, Nemini tamen propterea Mors parcit: omnes æquat, et pariter auferet. Mors omnibus eſt æqua; non ſuperbis Regum Divitiis magis quàm lacero Mendicorum Panno flectitur: nec frequentius Caſas et Tuguria, quàm Turres et Caſtra ingreditur, et expugnat; nec magis Iro quàm Cræſo, quàm Auguſto, ſe præſtitit inimicam: Mors, enim, neſcit Imperium; Principes non agnoſcit. — Kings may win Crowns, but cannot conquer Death. *Omnes Morti ſervamur, velut Armentum Boum ſaginatorum macellandorum.*

The Ancients erected no Altars to Death, becauſe it is inexorable, and no Way to be prevailed upon, or to be eſcaped by any of us. A Poet ſays - "Death is a Noun, yet not *declined* in any Caſe;" however, it is a ſafe Harbour that lies open for all the Paſſengers that have been toſſed upon the troubled Sea of this mortal Life.

have paſt ſo many Years ſecure, free from the Attack of his Fury, that they ſhall therefore eſcape it forever.

We read of our Forefathers, in a Time when the Age of Man was not contracted into the narrow Limits of threeſcore Years and ten, that, even then, they alſo ſubmitted to the Law of Nature, "died," and their mortal Part was turned to Duſt.

"All the Days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty Years, and he died."

"All the Days of Enos were nine hundred and five Years, and he died."

"All the Days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten Years, and he died."

"All the Days of Jared were nine hundred ſixty and two Years, and he died."

"All the Days of Methuſelah were nine hundred ſixty and nine Years, and he died."

Tho Men live long, and ſee not the Grave, yet no Man can finally deliver himſelf from it: Moſes, the meekeſt; Sampſon, the ſtrongeſt; Solomon, the wiſeſt; Job, the moſt patient; and David, "the Man after God's own Heart"—"Theſe all died, and their Sepulchres," (i.e) their Monuments of Mortality, "remain with us to this Day." (1) Fear

(1) There is nothing in Hiſtory which is ſo improving to the Reader

"Fear not the Sentence of Death, then; neither be thou againſt the Pleaſure of the Moſt-High: Remember

der, as thoſe Accounts which we meet with of the Death of eminent Perſons and of their Behaviour in that trying Seaſon; and We may add alſo, that there are no Parts in Hiſtory which affect and pleaſe the Reader in ſo ſenſible a Manner. The Reaſon is this, becauſe there is no other ſingle Circumſtance in the Story of any Perſon which can poſſibly be the Caſe of every one who reads it. A Battle or a Triumph are Conjunctures in which not one Man in a Million is likely to be engaged; but when we ſee a Perſon at the Point of Death, we cannot forbear being attentive to every thing he ſays or does, becauſe we are ſure that ſome Time or other we ſhall ourſelves be in the ſame melancholy Circumſtances. The General, the Statesman, or the Philoſopher, are perhaps Characters which we may never act in, but the *dying* Man is one, whom, ſooner or later, we ſhall certainly reſemble. "All Fleſh waxeth old as a Garment: for the Covenant from the Beginning, is, thou ſhalt die the Death." "As of the green Leaves on a thick Tree, ſome fall and ſome grow: ſo is the Generation of Fleſh and Blood, one cometh to an End, and another is born." "Every Work rotteth and conſumeth away, and the Worker thereof ſhall go withal."

Jam magìs, atquè magìs præceps agit omnia Fatum.
——— ——— *Mors omnes Falce demetit.*
Omnia Falce metit Tempus. ——— ———
——— ——— *Paulùmquè morati,*
Seriùs aut citiùs Sedem properamus in unam:
Tendimus hùc omnes, hæc eſt Domus ultima nobis.
Omnia Mors æquat. ——— ——— ———
Omnia ſub Lege Mors vocat atra ſuas
Lex univerſa mori. ———
All that are of the Earth ſhall turn to Earth again.
——— ——— *Omnes una manet Nox,*
Et calcanda ſemèl Via Letbi.

Pallida

member them that have been before thee, and that come after; for this is the Sentence of the Lord over all Flesh."

Though our Blessed Saviour, hath conquered Death in depriving it of its Power to hurt those that are his faithful Servants; yet, he hath not exempted us from the Laws of Mortality, but hath made Death a necessary Passage to the Attainment of eternal Happiness.

The Promises and Appointments of God are unchangeable; where eternal Truth stands engaged, the thing shall surely come to pass. Come he will, but whether in the FIRST, the SECOND, or THIRD Watch, we know not: but should he delay till the FOURTH, till Old Age and Gray-Hairs overtake us, yet this doth not prove that it might not have come sooner, or that it will not come at all; for "tho'

Pallida Mors æquo pulsat Pede Pauperum Tabernas,
Regumquè Turres. —— —— .
With equal Foot, rich Friend, impartial Fate
Knocks at the Cottage and the Palace Gate.

Maximus Pietate Æneas, eloquentissimus Cicero, ditissimus Cræsus Fato cidêre; Ubi Cæsar? Ubi Alexander ille Terrarum Dominus? Occubuit. bi Crassus? Expiravit. Ubi Catones? Ubi duo Fulmina Belli Scipiadæ? ccidêre. Nemini quidêm Mors parcere novit. Mors ultima Linea rerum.
Things as well as Men must die. Our Life is but a Journey to the xt World. *Vitæ summa brevis Spem nos vetat inchoare longam.*
All Men have the same Entrance into Life, and the like going out."

Serm. LXXIX.

"tho' it tarry, yet wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry." Health therefore, or Vigour will juſtify no Man's Unpreparedneſs.

"To Day, then, if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts; to Day, whilſt it is called to Day, and boaſt not yourſelves of to Morrow, for ye know not what a Day, what an Hour may bring-forth."

But, ſhould we fooliſhly neglect the preſent Seaſon, tho' another ſhould be allowed, (which is yet far from being certain,) our Paſſions will then be more and more untractable, and our vicious Inclinations more importunate and ſtrong, and we ſhall find it, in all Reſpects, "more difficult to do Good, after having been long accuſtomed to do Evil." Let us think, therefore, with ourſelves what it muſt be, knowingly to continue in a State of Unpreparedneſs for our latter End! our laſt, and ſure approaching Hour! A State, in which ſhould That Hour over take us, we are ſure not only to loſe "an eternal Weight of Glory," but to be miſerable forever, (i.e) for a Duration endleſs and unmeaſurable even in Thought; and which when all other Portions of Time ſhall be paſt and gone, will be no nearer to its End, then it even now is.

I am at a Loſs for a Name for ſuch a Procedure; Folly, or even Madness, muſt become Sound without

without Meaning ſhould they pretend to convey any juſt Idea of it.

Having thus proved the Certainty of Death, and the important Neceſſity of providing for it,

Let us proceed next to conſider what it is in ITSELF, and by what Means good Men may be fortified againſt it, ſo as to meet it with Courage. The Subject, indeed, may be reckoned, gloomy, but it muſt be admitted to be intereſting. (1)

The Cloſe of Life is a ſolemn and important Event

(1) Tho' Topicks of this Nature are obvious; yet, let it not be thought that therefore they are without Uſe. They require to be recalled, repeated, and enforced. Moral and religious Inſtruction derives its Efficacy, not ſo much from what Men are taught to know, as from what they are brought to feel. It is not the dormant Knowledge of any Truths, but the vivid Impreſſion of them, which has Influence on Practice. Neither let it be thought, that ſuch Meditations are unſeaſonable Intruſions upon thoſe who are living in Health, in Affluence, and Eaſe. There is no Hazard of their making too deep or painful Impreſſion. The Gloom which they occaſion is tranſient; and will ſoon, too ſoon, it is probable, be diſpelled by the ſucceeding Affairs & Pleaſures of the World. To Wiſdom it certainly belongs, that Men ſhould be impreſſed with juſt Views of their Nature and their State: and the Pleaſures of Life will always be enjoyed to moſt Advantage when they are tempered with ſerious Thought. "There is a Time to mourn, as well as a Time to rejoice." There is a virtuous "Sorrow, which is better than Laughter; and a Sadneſs of Countenance, by which the Heart is made better." "It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to the Houſe of Feaſting: for this is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to Heart." Serm. LXXIX.

vent, to which every wiſe Man will have regard in the general Tenour of his Conduct. No one can act his Part with Propriety, who conſiders not how it is to terminate; and to exclude from our Thoughts what we cannot prevent from actually taking-place, is the Refuge of none but the timorous and weak.

Beſides, We are more encouraged to enter on this Meditation, by reflecting on the ſuperior Advantages, which, as Chriſtians, we enjoy for overcoming the Fear of Death, beyond what holy Men of Old had, before the Days of Chriſtianity.

Thoſe great Objects which they beheld thro the Medium of Types & Figures, are clearly revealed to us. That Diſpenſation of Grace, which in Their Days, began to open, is NOW compleated. That Life and Immortality, which THEN only dawned on the World, have NOW ſhone-forth with full Light and Splendor.

Death may be conſidered in THREE Views: - as the Separation of the Soul from the Body; - as the Concluſion of the preſent Life; and as the Entrance into a new State of Exiſtence. In the firſt View, it is regarded as painful and agonizing. In the ſecond, it is melancholy and dejecting: - and in the third, it is awful and alarming.

One of the firſt Inquiries, therefore, concerning it,

it, is, for what Purpoſes it was cloathed with all theſe Terrors? Why, (under the Government of a gracious Being,) was the Termination of Life loaded with ſo much Sorrow and Diſtreſs?

We know that, in Conſequence of the Fall, Death was inflicted as a Puniſhment upon the human Race. But no unneceſſary Severities are ever exerciſed by God.

The Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the divine Plan would be much illuſtrated, if we obſerved that all the formidable Circumſtances which attend Death, are, in the preſent Situation of Mankind, abſolutely requiſite to the proper Government of the World; and that here, therefore, (as in many other Inſtances,) what ſeems, at firſt, to arraign the Goodneſs of the Deity, would upon Inquiry be found to confirm it. (1) But, Tho,

(1) The Terrors of Death are, in Fact, the great Guardians of Life. They excite in every Individual that Deſire of "*Self Preſervation* which *is the firſt Law of Nature.*" They reconcile him to bear the Diſtreſſes of Life with Patience. They prompt him to undergo its uſeful and neceſſary Labours with Alacrity; and reſtrain him from many of thoſe evil Courſes by which his Safety would be endangered. While they are in ſo many Reſpects beneficial to the Individual, they are at the ſame Time, the Safe-Guard of Society. If Death were not dreaded as it is by Men, no *publick* Order could be preſerved in the World. The Sword of Authority would be lifted up in vain. The Sanctions of the Law would loſe their Effect. The Scaffold and the Executioner would be derided; and the Violent left to trample unreſtrained

Tho, for the moſt ſalutary Purpoſes, it was requiſite that the Fear of Death ſhould be a powerful Principle in human Nature, yet, like our other Propenſities, it is apt, when left to itſelf, to run into Exceſs. Over many it uſurps ſuch an Aſcendant, as to debaſe their Character, and to defeat the chief End of Living.

To preſerve it within ſuch Bounds that it ſhall not interrupt us in performing the proper Offices of Life, lies the Diſtinction of the brave Man above the Coward, and to ſurmount it in ſuch a Degree that it ſhall not, even in near Proſpect, deject our Spirit, or trouble our Peace, is the great Preference which Virtue enjoys above Guilt. It has been the Study of the Wiſe and Reflecting, in every Age, to attain this Steadineſs of Mind. Philoſophy purſued it as its chief Object; and profeſſed that the great End of its Diſcipline, was, to enable its Votaries to conquer the Fear of Death.

Let us, then, before we have recourſe to the more powerful

ſtrained, on the Rights of the Peaceful. If, notwithſtanding the Reſtraints which Self-Preſervation impoſes, Society is ſo often diſturbed by the Crimes of the Wicked, what a Scene of Confuſion would it become, if capital Puniſhments, which are the laſt Reſource of Government, were of no Influence to deter Offenders?

For ſuch important Ends the Concluſion of Life has, by the Appointment of Providence, been made an awful Object, and the Valley of Death been planted with Terrors to the Apprehenſions of Men.

powerful Aid of Religion, hearken a little to what Reaſon has ſuggeſted on this Subject. Her Aſſiſtance may, perhaps, be not entirely deſpicable; and tho the Armour which ſhe offers, be not completely of Proof, it may ſerve, however, to turn aſide, or to blunt, ſome of the Shafts which are aimed againſt us by the laſt Foe of mankind.

It is well-known to us, that we are a mortal Race. Death, (as we have ſeen,) is the Law of our Nature, the Tribute of our Being, the Debt which all are bound to pay. On theſe Terms we received Life, that we ſhould be ready to give it up, when Providence calls us to make Room for others, who, in like Manner, when THEIR Time is come, ſhall follow us. (1) — He who is unwilling to ſubmit to Death when Heaven decrees it, deſerves not to have lived. We might as reaſonably complain, that we did not live before the Time appointed for our coming into the World, as lament that we are not to live longer, when the Period of our quitting it is arrived. What divine Providence has made neceſſary, human Prudence ought to comply with chearfully. Submit at any Rate we muſt; and is it not much better to follow

(1) —— *Perpetuus nulli datur Uſus; et Hæres*
Hæredem alterius, velut Unda ſuperveni Undam.
Serm. LXXIX.

low of our own Accord, than to be forced reluctantly to it? What Privilege have we to plead, or what Reaſon to urge, why we ſhould poſſeſs an Exemption from the common Doom? All things around us are mortal and periſhing. Cities, States and Empires, have their fixed Period. The proudeſt Monuments of human Art moulder into Duſt. Even the Works of Nature wax-old and decay. And,

In the Midſt of this univerſal Tendency to change, can we expect that to OUR Frame alone a permanent Duration ſhould be given? All who have gone before us, have ſubmitted to the Stroke of Death. All who are to come after us, muſt undergo the ſame Fate. The Great and the Good, - the Prince & the Peaſant, - the Renouned & the Obſcure, tread alike the Road that leads to the Grave; "That Bourn, from whence no Traveller returns." At the Moment we expire, thouſands throughout the World will, together with us, be yielding up their Breath.

Can that, therefore, be held as a great Calamity, which is common to us with every thing that live on the Earth; which is an Event as much accordin to the Courſe of Nature, as it is that Leaves ſhoul fall in Autumn, or ripe Fruit from the bending Tre

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Time

Times experienced. The Pomp of Death is more terrifying than Death itſelf. It is to the Weakneſs of Imagination, that it owes its chief Power of dejecting our Spirits; For, when the Force of the Mind is rouzed, there is almoſt no Paſſion in our Nature, but what has ſhown itſelf able to overcome the Fear of Death. Honour has defied it; - Love has deſpiſed it; - Shame has ruſhed upon it; - Revenge has diſregarded it; and Grief has a thouſand Times wiſhed for its Approach. — Is it not ſtrange, then, that Reaſon & Virtue cannot give us Strength to ſurmount THAT Fear, which, even in feeble Minds, ſo many Paſſions have conquered?

What Inconſiſtency is there in complaining ſo much of the Evils of Life, and being at the ſame Time afraid of what is to terminate them all? (1)

Who

(1) The Pains of Death and the Grave, are diſagreeable Images to preſent to the Mind; and the Thought of returning to Duſt, of being ſoon loſt and forgotten, very mortifying to the Pride of Man. But theſe owe, in great Part, their Terror to the Imagination only, which, a little Reaſon and Reflection will effectually diſſipate. The laſt Moments of Life are uſually thoſe in which we ſuffer leaſt; and if Sickneſs and Sorrow do not ſooner reconcile us, the Decrepitude and Miſeries of Age are more than enough to contraſt with all the Horrors of Death. — But alas! This, and Body of Man, (...) here on Earth, it would not be very eaſy to aſſign any tollerable Reaſon, much leſs a ſufficient one for That invincible Fear & Abhorrence of it, which almoſt all Men are ſubject to, and enſlaved by.

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What Inconſiſtency in [illegible]

This is not thinking of Death as Chriſtians or as Men. Were every thing to end with this Life, there would be nothing in Death or even in Life that would deſerve much Thought or Attention. On this Suppoſition indeed, how little to be dreaded, nay, in many Caſes how much to be deſired, were Death! But, our End, &c. (under)

our End is not in the Grave, neither doth Death deſtroy us; for Eternity is before us, and it is This which makes Death of ſuch Moment & Importance to us: for, how alarming is That Repreſentation, which the Scriptures give us, of the ſolemn Day approaching, which is to determine our Fate forever!

Were there no more than the Diſſolution of the Union of the Soul and Body of Man, (i.e) the End of this natural Life and Continuance here on Earth, it would not be very eaſy to aſſign any tollerable Reaſon, much leſs a ſufficient one for That invincible Fear & Abhorrence of it, which almoſt all Men are ſubject to, and enſlaved by.

Who can tell whether our future Life might not teem with Diſaſters and Miſeries, as yet unknown, were it to be prolonged according to our Wiſh? At any Rate, is it deſirable to draw Life out to the laſt Dregs, and to wait till Old-Age pour upon us its whole Store of Diſeaſes and Sorrows? We lament that we are to die; but did we view our Situation properly, we ſhould have much greater Cauſe to lament

There is, indeed, in every thing that hath Life, an Averſion to whatſoever is deſtructive of its Being, cauſed by natural Inſtinct. But Man, who is indued with Reaſon, ſhould be able, not only to know that he is afraid of Death; but alſo, why it is ſo terrible to him.

It is not becauſe the Life it puts an End to, is ſo happy; for Pain, Diſeaſes, Diſappointments and Miſeries, of innumerable Sorts incident to Mankind, concur to prove that This cannot be the true Reaſon of Man's being unwilling and afraid to part with Life.

Nor is it the Pain and Torment which he apprehends to be in the Separation of the Soul and Body, that makes him tremble at, & ſhrink back with ſo much Horror from it. For, were this the given Cauſe for his Fear of Death, it would hold much more ſtrongly for a Fear of Living; ſince it is not Death, but Life, that makes Men liable to, and capable of Pain.

The only true & ſufficient Reaſon, therefore, why Death is ſo truly terrible & painful to us, muſt be elſewhere ſought for, from *within* us, from our Unmindfulneſs and Unpreparedneſs for it.

Reaſon and Revelation aſſure us that Death is only the Entrance into another Life; a Life which ſhall never have an End; & in which we ſhall be forever happy or miſerable according to our Lives & Conduct here; that it is appointed unto Men once to die, but after that the Judgment; that God will judge every Man according to the Works done in the Body; that there is no Wiſdom, Knowledge, or Device in the Grave, whither we are going, but as Death leaves us, ſo Judgment will find us; it is this which gives all its Importance to Life itſelf, and makes Death the moſt intereſting Period in our whole

ment if we were deſtined to this Life without Poſſibility of Releaſe.

If, indeed, we might go to Heaven as ENOCH, and ELIJAH, did, without dying; (1) This would be agreeable; Or, if we could be of that Number, who ſhall be found alive at our Lord's coming, and "be changed in a Moment," This muſt be pleaſing to Nature, as it commits no Violence upon it.

But however, Since the ordinary Way to go to God and to Chriſt our Saviour, is, to "paſs thro the Valley of the Shadow of Death," there is nothing in our natural Abhorrence of a Diſſolution which ought not to be ſurmounted by Reaſon, by Reflection, by a firm Perſuaſion of the Truth in the Goſpel, and a well-grounded Hope of its Promiſes. Why cannot Religion do that, which Philoſophy has often done? Indeed, which Ambition and a Thirſt after Glory, does every Day? - How many, (as but juſt obſerved,) have, by mere Imagination, by a Deſire only of empty Honour, conquered the Fear of Death, and met it, indeed, purſued it, with Eagereſs and Intrepidity? — And ſurely, The

(1) *Molle Iter e Terrâ non eſt ad Sidera clara;*
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Mors Iter ad Vitam; Mors eſt et Janua Vitæ:
Sic placuit Fatis, ſic placuitque Deis:
Hinc Homines omnes ſemper ſunt Morte ſubacti,
Progeniti, Gnati; Quiſque ſubactus erit.
Lex univerſa mori. Serm. LXXIX.

Who can tell whether our future Life might not teem with Diſaſters and Miſeries, as yet unknown, were it to be prolonged according to our Wiſh? At any Rate, is it deſirable to draw Life out to the laſt Dregs, and to wait till Old-Age pour upon us its whole Store of Diſeaſes and Sorrows? We lament that we are to die; but did we view our Situation properly, we ſhould have much greater Cauſe to lament

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This is to die; to give in our Account of the Talents with which we have been intruſted; and to take our final Allotment, either with the good and faithful Servants of God, or with the wicked & ſlothful.

In this View Death is indeed the King of Terrors to the thoughtleſs and profligate; "Yea, (ſaith the Apoſtle,) &c. (under)

the Apoſtle,) is the Sting of Death," as coming to us loaded with our Sins, - oppreſſed with a guilty Conſcience, and with the Horror of our Crimes. We need not, therefore, be at a Loſs for the Reaſon upon which Men ground their Fears of the *firſt* Death: It is more than Cauſe ſufficient that they are afraid of the *firſt*, who are conſcious to themſelves that their Sins deſerve the *ſecond*; For, who is there that dare not dread, nay tremble at a miſerable Eternity?

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The Certainty of an immortal Life, and of endleſs Felicity ought to be as prevailing with us; But, when all joined, with united Force, ſhould arm our Reſolution; When the Chriſtian ſees that all BELOW is troubleſome and uneaſy; and knows that all ABOVE is ſerene and quiet; - knows, that however things diſturb him HERE, he ſhall THERE enjoy an everlaſting Felicity; This muſt needs vanquiſh his Fear of Death.

Let us expect, therefore, calmly that which is natural in itſelf, and which muſt be fit, becauſe it is the Appointment of Heaven. Let us perform our Duty as good Subjects of the Deity, during the Time allotted us; and rejoice that a Period is fixed for our Diſſmiſſion from the preſent Warfare. Let us remember that the ſlaviſh Dread of Death deſtroys all the Comfort of the Life which we ſeek to preſerve.

Could our Fears at all avail to prevent the Stroke, or even reſpite it, they might well be allowed; and we ſhould have ſome plauſible Reaſon to urge in their Defence. But alaſs! the Stroke is inevitable. Surely then, it is our Wiſdom to familiarize ourſelves with it, with an Event which MUST come ſhortly, - and which, (to render us ſtill more watchful,) may come inſtantly.

Claim

Claim, then, no more the Character of RATIONAL, Ye ſimple Ones of the Earth, who ſtart at the Thoughts of Death, and uſe every Method, which ingenious Thought can deviſe to diſſipate & expel it.

Lo, the Moment comes! and utterly unprepared, ye muſt ſtand the awful Event.

Such Reaſonings as theſe are ſpecious at leaſt, & plauſible. The Arguments are not without Strength, and ought to produce ſome Effect on a conſiderate reflecting Mind. But, it is to be ſuppoſed that their Effect will be chiefly felt when the Mind is calm & at Eaſe; - rather when ſpeculating upon Death at a Diſtance, than when beholding it at Hand.

When the critical Moment arrives, which places the anxious, trembling Soul on the Borders of an unknown World, Reaſonings drawn from Neceſſity and Propriety, will be but of ſmall Avail to quiet its Alarms.

In Order to afford Relief, we muſt give it Hope; we muſt promiſe it Protection; we muſt offer ſomewhat on which it can lay hold for Support, amidſt the Struggles of labouring Nature. Hence the great Importance of thoſe Diſcoveries which Revelation has made, and of thoſe Principles with which it fortifies the Heart.

The Conſideration of which, and their ſuperior

Efficacy for surmounting the Fear of Death, will be the Subject of the next.

Sermon

SERMON LXXX.

On the ſame Subject.

Heb. ix. 27.
"It is appointed unto Men once to die."

In Order to judge aright of the Importance of thoſe Diſcoveries which Revelation has made, & the Principles it has eſtabliſhed to fortifie the Heart against the Terrors of Death, and their ſuperior Efficacy for ſurmounting the Fear of it, it will be proper to take a View of Death in each of thoſe Lights in which it appears moſt formidable to Mankind.

It may be conſidered, firſt, as the Termination of our preſent Exiſtence; the final Period of all its Joys and Hopes. For, "to him that is joined to all the living there is Hope; for the Living know that they ſhall die, but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a Reward; for the Memory of them is forgotten. Alſo their Love, & their Hatred, & their Envy is now periſhed, neither have they any more

more a Portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun." (1)

The concluding Scene of any Courſe of Action, in which we have been engaged with Pleaſure, ſeldom fails of ſtriking the Mind with painful Regret. And, how many Circumſtances will concur to heighten that Regret, when the Time comes of our bidding an eternal Adieu to every Purſuit which had occupied our Attention as Citizens of the World, when we ſhall be cut-off from among Men, as tho we had never been!

The Dejection into which we are apt to ſink at ſuch a Juncture, will bear Proportion to the Degree of our Attatchment to the Objects which we leave, (2) and to the Importance of thoſe Reſources which remain with us when they are gone. Here,

(1) An inſpired Pen ſtyles Death, (very ſignificantly,) "The King of Terrors;" For there is nothing, (ſimply conſidered in itſelf,) more imaginably terrifying; for it is poſſible to decline the Edge of drawn Swords, - to ſtop the Mouths of Lions, - or even to quench the fiery Darts of the Wicked; but when Death ſhoots his poiſoned Arrows, who can ſecure himſelf from his ſure, right-aiming Stroke?

(2) *Qui minus Deliciarum novit in Vitâ, minus timet Mortem.* The only Way to enjoy Life, is not to fear Death; & it is this Fear alone that diſturbs the Repoſe of the Voluptuary. When we come to die, nothing will miniſter leſs Comfort to us than a great Eſtate; for (like the Young-Man in the Goſpel,) we ſhall "go away ſo much the more ſorrowful, becauſe we have great Poſſeſſions."

Here, therefore, at the Hour of Death, will be manifeſt the Difference that will take-place between the Righteous and the Ungodly. The latter knows nothing higher or better than the preſent State of Exiſtence. His Intereſts, his Pleaſures, his Expectations, are all centered HERE. Dreadful, therefore, and inſupportable muſt be that Event, which ſeparates him from theſe forever. Whereas,

The Culture of Religion previouſly forms the Mind of a Chriſtian for a calm and eaſy Tranſition from this Life. It inſtructs him in the proper Eſtimate of earthly Happineſs. It ſets higher Proſpects before him. It forms him to a more reſigned Taſte of Enjoyment, than what the common Round of worldly Amuſements could gratify; and gives him Connections and Alliances with ſpiritual Objects, which are unknown to the Man of the World: Hence, tho he be attached to Life by the natural Feelings of Humanity, he is raiſed above the weak and unmanly Regret of parting with it. He knew that

That Man, whoſe Heart is rivetted to the Earth, will be loath to go down into Silence, where he can enjoy it no longer.

To a worldly-minded Man, Death, (which ſeparates him from the World,) muſt be truly alarming. — "O Death, how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at Reſt in his Poſſeſſions, to a Man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath Proſperity in all things!"

that it was intended as preparatory only to a ſucceeding State. As ſoon, therefore, as the Seaſon of Preparation is finiſhed, he expects a Removal; and when Providence calls, he bids adieu to the World with compoſed Reſolution, and an undiſturbed Heart.

Tho' Death interrupts him in the Midſt of his Deſigns, & breaks-off the Plans which he had formed of being uſeful to his Family and the World: - yet, all theſe he leaves with Tranquility in the Hands of that Providence to which he has ever been accuſtomed to look up with Reſignation; which governed the World wiſely and graciouſly before he exiſted; and which he knows will continue to govern it with equal Wiſdom and Benignity, when he ſhall be in it no more. The Time of his Departure was not left to his own Choice; but he believes it to be the moſt proper, becauſe it is the Time choſen by Him who cannot err. "Honourable Age is not That which ſtandeth in Length of Time, nor that which is meaſured by Number of Years: but, Wiſdom is the Gray-Hair to Man; and an unſpotted Life is Old-Age."

When he beholds his Friends & Relations mourning around him, his Heart may melt, but will not be over-powered; for it is relieved by the Thought

that

that he is bidding them only a temporary, not an eternal Farewell. He commends them, in the mean Time, to the Bleſſing of that God whom he has ſerved, and while he is parting from them, he hears a Voice which ſooths his Spirit with theſe comforting Words, "Leave thy fatherleſs Children; I will preſerve them alive; and let thy Widow truſt in me." — But further,

Death is more than the Concluſion of human Life. It is the Gate which, at the ſame Time that it cloſes on this World, opens into Eternity. (1)

Under this View it has often been the Subject of Terror to the ſerious and reflecting. The Tranſition they were about to make, was awful. Before them lay a vaſt undiſcovered Region, from whoſe Bourn no Traveller ever returned to bring Information of the Reception which he found, or of the Objects which he met with there.

The firſt Conception which ſuggeſts itſelf, is, that the diſembodied Spirit is to appear before its Creator, who is then to act as its Judge. The ſtrict Inqui-

(1) *Mors Iter ad Vitam, Mors eſt et Janua Vitæ.*
"The Wiſe, the Juſt, the Pious and the Brave,
"Live in their Deaths, and flouriſh from the Grave,
"Grain hid in Earth, repays the Peaſant's Care,
"And Evening-Suns but ſet to riſe more fair."
Serm. LXXX.

Inquiſition which it muſt undergo, the impartial Doom which it muſt hear pronounced, and the unalterable State to which it ſhall be aſſigned, are awful Forms riſing before the Imagination. They are Ideas which Conſcience forces upon all. Mankind can neither avoid conſidering themſelves as accountable Creatures, nor avoid viewing Death as the Seaſon when their Account is to be given. Such Sentiments as theſe are with moſt Men, the Source of Dread; with all Men, of Anxiety.

To a certain Degree a good Conſcience will convey Comfort. The Reflection on a well-ſpent Life makes a wide Difference between the laſt Moments of the Righteous and the Sinner. (1) But!

Whoſe Conſcience is ſo clear as to ſtrike him with no Remorſe? - Whoſe Righteouſneſs is ſo unblemiſhed as to abide the Scrutiny of the great Searcher of Hearts? Who dares reſt his everlaſting Fate upon his perfect Conformity to the Rule of Duty throughout the WHOLE of his Life?

We muſt not judge of the Sentiments of Men at the Approach of Death, by their ordinary Train of Thought in the Days of Health and Eaſe. Their Views of moral Conduct are then, too generally, ſuperficial; ſlight Excuſes ſatisfy their Minds, & the Avoca-

(1) See the laſt Part of the Note, page 286.

Avocations of Life prevent their Attention from dwelling long on diſagreeable Objects. But, when altogether withdrawn from the Affairs of the World, they are left to their own Reflections on paſt Conduct; with their Spirits enfeebled by Diſeaſe, and their Minds impreſſed with the Terrors of an inviſible Region; the moſt reſolute are apt to deſpond, and even the Virtuous are in Danger of ſinking under the Remembrance of their Errors and Frailties. The trembling Mind caſts every where around an anxious exploring Eye after any Power that can uphold, any Mercy that will ſhield and ſave it. Accordingly, we ſee how eagerly every Device has been embraced which Superſtition could any where invent, for quieting the Alarms of the departing Spirit.

Here, therefore, appears the great Importance of thoſe Diſcoveries which Chriſtianity has made concerning the Government of the Univerſe. It diſplays the Enſigns of Grace and Mercy. It reveals the Almighty not as a Creator only and a Judge, but as a compaſſionate Parent, "who knows our Frame, who remembers that we are but Duſt, who pities us, even as a Father, the Children; & with whom there is Forgiveneſs," that he may be loved, as well as feared.

These general Views, however, of the divine Administration, would not have been sufficient to give full Relief, if they had not been confirmed by certain decisive Facts.

Two such Facts the Gospel holds-forth to us, particularly adapted to the Situation of human Nature in its greatest Extremity, [viz] The Atonement, & the Intercession of Christ.

There is no Sentiment more natural to Men, than that Guilt must be expiated by Suffering. All Government is founded, on the Principle, that publick Justice requires Compensation for Crimes; and all Religions proceed upon the Belief, that, in Order to the Pardon of the Sinner, Atonement must be made to the Justice of Heaven. - Hence the endless Variety of Sacrifices, Victims and Expiations which have filled the Earth.

The great Sacrifice which our Redeemer offered for Guilt, coincides with these natural Sentiments of Mankind in giving Ease to the Heart. It shows us the Forfeit of Guilt paid by a divine Personage in our Behalf; and allows us to look-up to the Governour of the World, as merciful to the guilty, in Consistency with Justice and Order. But still,

Some Anxiety might remain concerning the Extension of That Mercy to our own Case in Particular. A

An inviſible Sovereign is an awful Idea; Almighty, unknown Power is always formidable, and would be ready to overwhelm the Spirit of the feeble, were not an Interceſſor with that Sovereign revealed.

This Interceſſor is one who lived and acted in our own Nature; who not only knows, but who experienced our Frailty; who has all the Feelings of a Brother for human Infirmity & Diſtreſs; who himſelf paſſed thro that "Valley of the Shadow of Death," which is now opening on us; to whoſe powerful Mediation with his Father we have every Encouragement to commit the Charge of our departing Spirit.

"Who ſhall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the Right-Hand of God, who alſo maketh Interceſſion for us."

Such is the Proviſion which Chriſtianity has made for comforting the laſt Hours of Man. The Atonement and the Interceſſion of Chriſt, are the Refuge of the penitent Sinner, and the Conſolation of the Saint. By their Means the Throne of the Univerſe is encircled with Mercy. The Cloud which hung over the inviſible World begins to be diſperſed; & Hope brightens thro the Gloom. But,

What completes the Triumph of good Men over Death, is the Proſpect of eternal Felicity.

Death is terrible to Nature, but the comfortable Hopes of a Bleſſed Immortality do ſtrangely relieve the fainting Spirits of a dying Man; - An eternal Weight of Glory is what Death puts us into, - the Door thro which we enter; And! "what would not a Man do to inherit eternal Life?" - Would he, (when purchaſed by an holy Life, by the Life and Death of an holy Jeſus,) would he be afraid to enter on it? or, would he ſhun the Entrance to it? Surely, in Reaſon, he would not; but would welcome Death as the Meſſenger of glad Tidings, and the Conductor to eternal Happineſs.

To the Wicked, who have no Hopes after this Life, Death is truly terrible, but to the Righteous, who have hope, not only in their latter End, but AFTER it, Death is no more than a Paſſage from bad Men, to God and his holy Angels; from Pain and Sickneſs to Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory; — How bleſſed is That Man, then, who ſo runneth as to obtain it! - who ſo lives, that he may die in Peace, and riſe in Glory.

Conſidering our End, then, a continued Life in this World would be really afflicting; but, as Death is a Paſſage to a glorious Reſurrection, and to Life eternal,

eternal, from all the Troubles of this World, our Departure hence, when it ſhall pleaſe God to call us, ſhould be Matter of Joy.

Death was once, indeed, a threathed Curſe, but now, (under our new and better Covenant, with all theſe Advantages,) it is become a promiſed Bleſſing.

This was the great Object after which all Nations have ſighed, as the only complete Remedy both of the Miſeries of Life, and the Fears of Death. — On This, the Learned & the Ignorant, the Civilized and the Savage of Mankind, bent their longing Eyes; eagerly graſping at every Argument, and fondly indulging every Hope, that could promiſe them a propitious Deity, and the Prolongation of Exiſtence in a happier State. But, beyond Wiſhes and feeble Expectations the Light of Nature could hardly reach. Even the moſt cultivated, philoſophical Mind, was, at the Hour of Diſſolution, left in painful Suſpence; - But happily,

Chriſtianity has put an End to all Heſitation and Doubt on this important Subject. It has drawn aſide the Veil thro which Reaſon eſſayed to penetrate; & has diſplayed to full View the future Dwellings of the Spirits of the Juſt, the Manſions of everlaſting Reſt, the City of the living God." It has

not only informed us that a State of perfect Felicity is prepared for the Righteous, but has added to this Information a Variety of Circumstances which render that State sensible to our Imagination, and encouraging to our Hopes. It represents it as fully secured by the gracious Undertaking of the Saviour of the World. It describes it as an Inheritance, to which he has given his Followers a Right and Title. He is said to have taken Possession of it in their Names. He rose from the Grave as "the First-Fruits of them that slept;" and under the Character of their Fore-Runner, entered into the heavenly Mansions.

Hence, to those who have lived a virtuous Life, and who die in the Faith of Christ, the whole Aspect of Death is changed, and it becomes the Messenger of Life and Liberty. They view themselves as going forth to a Land, new, indeed, to Sight, but by Faith and Hope frequented long before; where they will continue to be under the Charge of Him who hath hitherto been their Guardian, be re-united to their Friends, and admitted, with the whole Assembly of Saints, into God's immediate and blisful Presence forever. — In the "Sight of the Unwise they may, indeed, seem to die, and their Departure may be taken for utter Destruction. But they are in Peace; their Reward also is with the Lord, and the Care of them with the Most-High." The

The Man who believes This, and expects it, can have no Reaſon to be afraid of Death. For, as Sin is the Cauſe of Death, ſo alſo it is that only which makes Death itſelf moſt terrible. — It is not barely the Separation of the Soul and Body, which is the Terror of Death to a Chriſtian; but that Separation as inflicted by, & accompanied with, the Wrath of God. It is Sin only, which is the Horror of Death, and which gives it that Sting which makes it really inſupportable even to the moſt diſtant Thought.

The Conſciouſneſs of having, in ſome Meaſure, lived holily and unblameably, makes a Man look up with a chearful Aſſurance to the great Supporter of his Being, and enables him to ſee thro' the darkeſt Clouds of Sorrow and Affliction, and to behold with an Eye of Faith, that heavenly Country, whether he is travelling, and where he hopes ſhortly to arrive.

In the Hour of Death, he conſiders the Pains of his Diſſolution to be nothing elſe, but the breaking down of that Partition which ſtands betwixt his Soul and the Sight of that Being who is always preſent with him, and is about to manifeſt itſelf to him in Fulneſs of Joy: and he will look into Eternity without Terror, where inſtead of a Court of Juſtice he is to approach a Throne of Grace; inſtead of a Judge, rigorous to mark what is done amiſs, he will

meet with an Advocate and Saviour, who died for us, & has redeemed us at the Price of his own Blood: ſuch a Soul as This caſteth away Fear, - poſſeſſes a perfect Calm and Serenity; and, tranſported with Joy and Triumph, magnifies the Lord, and rejoices in God its Saviour, who is ready to pronounce it bleſſed, and to crown it with Glory. — And!

What a glorious Incitement is this to all Men to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World! that no good Action, that we do, will be loſt; but that in a little Time all our Services will be infinitely rewarded: That every Grace & Virtue, which we exerciſe in this Life, and every Degree of them, will receive their juſt Recompence at the Reſurrection of the juſt; and that if we believe in God and ſerve him faithfully and ſincerely in this Life, we may be aſſured, that through the tender Mercies of our heavenly Father, and the Merits of our Redeemer, we ſhall be received into a Place of everlaſting Reſt and Peace, where we ſhall adore and praiſe the Author of our Salvation, and contemplate the glorious Perfections of his Majeſty, with a Joy and Satisfaction infinitely exceeding all that we can now poſſibly conceive: when Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of Life, and Death and Sorrow ſhall be no more! When we ſhall be eaſed of all

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our Pains, - Reſolved of all our Doubts, - cleanſed from all our Sins, - be freed from all our Fears, - be happy beyond our Hopes, and have all this Happineſs ſecured to us beyond the Power either of Time and Change. — But,

Suppoſing both the Regret of quitting Life, and the Dread of entering into a future State to be overcome, there is yet one Circumſtance which renders Death formidable to many, [viz] the Shock, which Nature is apprehending to ſuſtain at the Separation of the Soul from the Body.

Formidable, we admit, this may juſtly render it to them whoſe languiſhing Spirits have no inward Fund, whence they can draw Relief. (1) Firmneſs & Strength of Mind is peculiarly requiſite for the Support of Nature in its laſt Extremity; & that Strength is ſupplied by Religion.

The Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and the Remembrance of a virtuous Life, a well-grounded Truſt in the divine Acceptance, and a firm Hope of future

(1) When the Death of the Body is the Fore-runner of that Death of the Soul, from which there is no Hope of Releaſe, but "the Wrath of God muſt abide on it forever," then it is that Death appears truly terrible. — For a wicked Man to conſider that "the Face of the Lord is againſt them that do Evil," & conſequently that he is of that Number, muſt make him exceedingly to fear and tremble.

Death, conſidered as an Enemy to Nature, *all* Men muſt be averſe to it; as the Wages of Sin, the Wicked muſt dread it; but as a Paſſage to Heaven, good Men only can deſire it.

future Felicity, are Principles ſufficient to give Compoſure and Fortitude to the Heart, even in the midſt of Agony.

In what a high Degree they can ſuſpend or alleviate the Feelings of Pain, has been fully demonſtrated by the magnanimous Behaviour of ſuch as have ſuffered Death in the Cauſe of Conſcience and Religion. How often has the World beheld them advancing to meet that ſuppoſed King of Terrors not with Calmneſs only, but with Joy; raiſed by divine Proſpects and Hopes into an entire Neglect and Contempt of bodily Suffering? — And,

It is not without Reaſon that a peculiar Aſſiſtance from Heaven is looked-for by good Men at the Hour of Death; as they are taught to believe, that in all the Emergencies of their Life divine Goodneſs has watched over them, they have Ground to conclude, that at the laſt it will not forſake them, but that at the Seaſon, when its Aid is moſt needed, it will be moſt liberally communicated. Accordingly,

A Perſuaſion ſo agreeable to the Benignity and Compaſſion of the Father of Mercies, has been the Comfort of pious Men in every Age. "My Fleſh and my Heart faileth, (ſaith David,) but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion forever." "In the Valley and Shadow of Death I will fear no Evil, for Thou art with me." When

When "the Rod and Staff" of this Shepherd of Israel are held-forth to his expiring Servants, declining Nature needs no other Support. The secret Influence of his reviving Spirit is sufficient for their Consolation and Support, while the painful Struggle with Mortality lasts! till at Length, when the Moment arrives that "the Silver Cord must be loosed" their almighty Protector carries-off the immortal Spirit unhurt by the Fall of its earthly Tabernacle, and places it in a better Mansion.

How respectable and happy is such a Conclusion of human Life, when, in this Manner, we quit the Stage of Time, honoured and supported with the Presence of our Creator, and enjoying till the last Moment of Reflection, the pleasing Thought, that we have not lived in Vain! - "Verily our Reward will be great with the Lord" - "for such Honour have all his Saints."

After the View we have taken of the Advantages possessed by good Men for overcoming the Fears of Death, the first Sentiment which should arise in our Minds, (after due Thankfulness to God for them,) is, earnest Desire to acquire and preserve them to ourselves, and by Meditation, familiarize ourselves with them.

The Road which leads to them is plain and obvious; a peaceful and happy Death, is, by the Appointment of Heaven, connected with a holy and virtuous Life. (1)

Let us renounce, therefore, all criminal Purſuits and Pleaſures; let us "fear God, and keep his Commandments" - "let us hold Faith and a good Conſcience," if we hope for Comfort at our laſt Hour. To prepare for which every wiſe Man ſhould conſider as his moſt important Concern. Indeed,

Death may juſtly be held as the Teſt of Life. Let a Man have ſupported his Character with Eſteem and Applauſe, as long as he acted on the buſy State of

(1) *Non poteſt malè mori, qui benè vixit; et vix benè moritur, qui malè vixit.* — The beſt Preparation for Death is the conſtant exerciſing of Piety and Virtue in the whole Courſe of our Lives: This is the only Armour that is Proof againſt the Attacks of that deſtructive Enemy to Nature. So that Men ſtrangely delude themſelves, who depend upon any other Method than that of keeping a Conſcience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man. The Sinner, therefore, however he may now truſt in the Multitude of his Riches, and ſtrengthen himſelf in his Wickedneſs, muſt then let-go all his Dependencies, and deſcend into the Regions of Darkneſs without Hope, and, (what is yet more terrible,) with dreadful Expectations.

We ſhould, therefore, order it ſo, that every ſingle Day ſhould be like our whole Lives to us; Not to lay-hold on it as the Laſt; but to look upon it in a Poſſibility of being ſuch: to take-care before Age ſurprizes us, to live well; and when Age advances, to die ſo; for, to die well, is to die willingly.

of the World, yet, if at the End he ſinks into Dejection and Terror, all his former Honour is effaced; he departs under the Imputation of either a guilty Conſcience, or a puſillanimous Mind.

In the other Parts of human Conduct, Diſguiſe and Subtilty may impoſe on the World; but ſeldom can Artifice be ſupported in the Hour of Death: At that critical Juncture, the genuine Character commonly appears. When, therefore, we behold the Scene of Life cloſed with proper Compoſure and Dignity, we naturally infer Integrity and Fortitude. We are led to believe that divine Aſſiſtance ſupports the Soul, and we preſage its Tranſition into a happier Manſion. — How ſweet and comfortable is Death to thoſe who fear God and ſerve him! "Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace:" but it is not ſo with the Wicked; for, as "the Righteous hath Hope in his Death; ſo the Wicked is driven away in his Wickedneſs:" He goes out of the World in a Storm and Tempeſt. "There is no Peace ſaith my God to the Wicked." — But further,

And what eſpecially induces hereto, is, that as "it is appointed unto Men once to die," ſo the preciſe Time of our Departure hence is utterly uncertain.

This is the ſtrongeſt Argument we can uſe to perſuade to Care and Circumſpection. (1)

We may ſuppoſe, perhaps, that we are yet at a ſafe Diſtance, and prepare againſt the Danger before we approach it. But what is this Life which ſtands between us and Eternity? How many Years or Days of it can we call our own? Do we want to be told of the uncertain Tenure by which we hold it? How many are gone before us who entertained the ſame Confidence, and promiſed themſelves many Years, and yet are not! Therefore, they would have been more bold in venturing their Souls, had it been otherwiſe; but now they have no Cloak for their Neglect.

The Promiſes and Appointments of God are unchangeable; where eternal Truth ſtands engaged, the thing ſubſiſts, and ſhall ſurely come to paſs. Come he will; but whether in the FIRST, the SECOND, or THIRD Watch, we know not: But bleſſed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh

fatally have been ſurprized in an evil Hour, in an Hour when we look'd from Heaven to do it. If, in Proportion as this Subject is thought diſtant, it loſes its Power of affecting us, we muſt ſupply this Defect by our own Care & Application. As our Imagination grows indolent and unapt to be moved thro' Cuſtom and Habitude, we muſt call up our Reaſon to repreſent the Greatneſs and Importance of the Subject, which, when well preſented to the Mind, will not fail to fix and engage its Attention.

(1) See Luke 12. 41—48.

Health, therefore, or Strength will juſtify no Man's Unpreparedneſs. — But further,

Another Requiſite to make us die with Comfort and Satisfaction, is, that we wean our Affections from the things of this World.

The buſy Scene in which we live naturally takes up our Thoughts and Attention; & it is with Difficulty that they are called off to the Contemplation of Truths that are ſpeculative, and which we conſider as ſtanding at a Diſtance from us. The Senſes, Imagination, and Paſſions, are perpetually crowding the Mind with Objects of their own; and amidſt the Noiſe and Tumult of theſe, the ſtill Voice of Reaſon is not eaſily heard. The Objects they preſent to us are near at Hand, and have the Advantage of making a livelier Impreſſion upon us; and promiſing immediate Pleaſure and Satisfaction, rob us of all Inclination as well as Leiſure to attend to Objects that are more remote & ſpiritual. The Wants of the Body and the Proviſions of the animal Life employ many of our active Powers; the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, extend our Wiſhes and Purſuits much farther; and where Men are leſs engaged in the Cares and Buſineſs of Life, Amuſement and Pleaſure are often found as powerful Avo-

on the Year that is past as full of Life and Hope as ourselves? (*) And which of us can be sure that this Night his Soul shall not be required of him?

If then the Sentence of Death, and the Judgment of God, every Moment hang over us; why should we be a Moment unprepared? (†)

Had that critical Moment, &c. (under)

Had that critical Moment been revealed to us severally, it would have encouraged Licentiousness and Security in the Beginning of our Days, and give Countenance to a late Reformation and Repentance; not to add, the agonizing and increasing Dread of its known and sure Approach.

As the Case now is, we see how apt Men are to run these Hazards of deferring Repentance; we may reasonably presume, therefore, they would have been more bold in venturing their Souls, had it been otherwise; but now they have no Cloak for their Neglect.

The Promises and Appointments of God are unchangeable, where eternal Truth stands engaged the thing subsists, and shall surely come to pass. "Come he will; but whether in the FIRST, the SECOND, or THIRD Watch, we know not: But blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he comet

family have been surprized in an evil Hour, in an Hour when we look'd not for it, and with the Guilt of many unrepented Sins upon us?

This, then, should teach us the absolute Necessity of a speedy Repentance and Amendment, that we make no tarrying to turn to the Lord; that we hasten to flee from the Wrath to come; and rest not, but by the Sincerity of our Obedience, we have secured a good Hope of this Life that is to come.

(*) Were this Event, which we are contemplating, unheard of, and the Sentence, "Thou shalt die, and not live," pronounced upon us, it is easy to conceive with what Consternation it would fill us; but we are not at all the less concerned in the Event now it is as all less certain that it will be known to us by a Voice from Heaven.

If then this Truth be the same, and all its Consequences will certainly follow, why should we not act upon it with the same Strictness, Zeal, and Assiduity, as we should if we were instantly called to

Health, therefore, or Strength will justify no Man's Unpreparedness. — But further,

Another Requisite to make us die with Comfort and Satisfaction, is, that we wean our Affections from the things of this World.

The busy Scene in which we live naturally takes up our Thoughts and Attention; & it is with Difficulty that they are called off to the Contemplation of Truths that are speculative, and which we consider as standing at a Distance from us. The Senses, Imagination, and Passions, are perpetually crowding the Mind with Objects of their own; and amidst the Noise and Tumult of these, the still Voice of Reason is not easily heard. The Objects they present to us are near at Hand, and have the Advantage of making a livelier Impression upon us; and promising immediate Pleasure and Satisfaction, rob us of all Inclination as well as Leisure to attend to Objects that are more remote & spiritual. The Wants of the Body and the Provisions of the animal Life employ many of our active Powers; the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, extend our Wishes and Pursuits much farther; and where Men are less engaged in the Cares and Business of Life, Amusement and Pleasure are often found as powerful Avo-

on the Year that is paſt as full of Life and Hope as ourſelves? (‡) And which of us can be ſure that this Night his Soul ſhall not be required of him?

If then the Sentence of Death, and the Judgment of God, every Moment hang over us, why ſhould we be a Moment unprepared? (*)

Had that critical Moment, &c. (under)

Had that critical Moment been revealed to us ſeverally, it would have encouraged Licentiouſneſs and Security in the Beginning of our Days, and give Countenance to a late Reformation and Repentance; not to add, the agonizing and increaſing Dread of its known and ſure Approach.

As the Caſe now is, we ſee how apt Men are to run theſe Hazards of deferring Repentance; we may reaſonably preſume, therefore, they would have been more bold in venturing their Souls, had it been otherwiſe; but now they have no Cloak for their Neglect.

The Promiſes and Appointments of God are unchangeable, where eternal Truth ſtands engaged the thing ſubſiſts, and ſhall ſurely come to paſs. "Come he will; but whether in the FIRST, the SECOND, or THIRD Watch, we know not: But bleſſed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh ſhall find watching: of a Truth I ſay unto you that he will make him Ruler over all that he hath." (2)

Health

(1) *Moriendi mille Figuræ. — Incertum eſt in quo Loco Mors te expectet. Tu illam in omni Loco expecta: egregia enim Res eſt, Morti conſiſcere. — Quicquid facies, reſpice Finem.*

(‡) When we reflect on the Numbers that every Year hath ſwept away of our Friends and Acquaintance, and find it almoſt a Wonder that we are ſtill left to ſurvive them; this Uncertainty of our Abode here, will lead us naturally to ask ourſelves, How are we prepared to enter into another Life? Had it been our Lot to have been called to it before, could we have met Death with Cheerfulneſs, with a comfortable Hope that we ſhould be able to ſtand in the Judgment, or ſhould we have been ſtruck with Fear, and Affrighty, as we ſhould if we were ſuddenly called upon

Health, therefore, or Strength will justify no Man's Unpreparedness. — But further,

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cations from all ſerious Thought and Reflection.

This Attachment to the World begins as early as Life itſelf; and when it is not reſtrained by Education, for which it is often too powerful, grows every Day ſtronger; till by Cuſtom it becomes habitual, and gains the Poſſeſſion of the whole Mind.

Hence it is, that Men of the greateſt Abſtraction of Thought, and who have a ſerious Senſe of Religion upon their Minds, often find it difficult to collect their Thoughts, and to keep them fixed for any Time on ſpiritual Objects. And in Others the Paſſions and Affections are ſo abſolutely engroſſed, and the Powers of the Mind as it were exhauſted, by the Concerns of this World, that they become incapable of any Fervency in the common Acts of Devotion; and even at the End of a long Life, and on the very Verge of Eternity, are ſometimes unable to raiſe their Thoughts and Affections to Heaven, or to diſengage them from temporal Affairs. This is ſometimes the Caſe, even in Men of no abandoned Character. So dangerous is the Habit of Inattention to our Duty, and of Sloth and Negligence in our ſpiritual Concerns. — But,

If Reaſon is given to us to be our Guide through Life; if it is this which makes us Men; how unlike to Men, how unworthy of our Character, is it to

live wholly by Appetite, Senſe, and Paſſion! And how ſhould we employ this Faculty of Man but in the true Buſineſs, the End and Deſtination of Man? A little Attention to this Subject will ſhow us the Neceſſity of attending to it ſtill further. And we cannot long attend to it without ſeeing the Folly of attending ſo much to any thing elſe. The glittering Scenes which captivate our Senſes and Imaginations will ſoon be found to be Illuſion and Deceit; The Honours and Pleaſures of Life will fade away and vaniſh into nothing, when we hold up Eternity to our View. (X) Thus

ſhould, therefore, accuſtom ourſelves to reſign freely to God, what Death will take from us by Force - to be leſs concerned for the things of the Body, and all bodily Pleaſures; to expect, (with Submiſſion to the Will of God,) the Succeſs of our temporal Affairs; to ſuppreſs all ambitious and covetous Deſires; to retrench, ſometimes, that Uſe of lawful Pleaſures; to abound in the Works of Charity; to be moſt ready to part with what we love moſt, when God thinks

(X) leſſon of the Vanity of human Things, and the Folly of attending to them. Go to the Tomb of the Monarch and there ſtudy Quality, behold his great Titles, his royal Robes, and all his Flatteries, all are no more for ever in this World. Behold the Conſequences of Intemperance in the Tomb of the Glutton, ſee his Appetite now fully ſatisfied; his Senſes deſtroyed, and his Bones ſcattered. Thus the Tombs of the Wicked condemn their Practice, and ſtrongly recommend Virtue.

cations from all ſerious Thought and Reflection.

This Attachment to the World begins as early as Life itſelf; and when it is not reſtrained by Education, for which it is often too powerful, grows every Day ſtronger; till by Cuſtom it becomes habitual, and gains the Poſſeſſion of the whole Mind.

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If Reaſon is given to us to be our Guide through Life; if it is this which makes us Men; how unlike to Men, how unworthy of our Character, is it to liv

Thus the Thoughts of our latter End, if we will but at first give it a fair Entertainment in the Mind, will ſoon ſecure itſelf a good Poſſeſſion there; and will break the Force of that Enchantment by which the Idol of this World hath blinded our Eyes that we ſhould not ſee. — The Conſideration that we are but Strangers, &c. (under)

that we are but Strangers & Pilgrims in this World; and that we have here no Abiding, ſhould in all Reaſon diſengage our Hearts from a ſettled Deſire in it. Our Concern to part with earthly things will always bear a Proportion to the Love and Eſteem where-with we have enjoyed them; and to be ſeparated from Objects upon which we have fixed our Hearts, muſt be attended with great Regret. We ſhould, therefore, accuſtom ourſelves to reſign freely to God, what Death will take from us by Force - to be leſs concerned for the things of the Body, and all bodily Pleaſures; to expect, (with Submiſſion to the Will of God,) the Succeſs of our temporal Affairs; to ſuppreſs all ambitious and covetous Deſires; to retrench, ſometimes, that Uſe of lawful Pleaſures; to abound in the Works of Charity; to be moſt ready to part with what we love moſt, when God thinks it; and to bear all Loſſes and Afflictions without Murmuring; ſo that we may be able to ſay, "we die daily;" not only becauſe the Time of our Death is every Moment approaching; but alſo, becauſe

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(*) A proper View of Death may be uſeful to abate moſt of the irregular Paſſions; thus, for Inſtance, we may ſee what Avarice comes to in the laſt Stage of the Miſer; this is the Man who could never be ſatisfied in his Riches, but the narrower his Circumſtances are inclined, and what ſmall Compaſs contains him, ſtinks Ambition, in the Grave of That enterprizing Man; for a Bit great Dignity, how miſerably Ridiculous are all Attempts and Pomp in that ſad Triumph of all human Projects. Approach the Tomb of the proud Man, and the hungry Countenance ſtrongly diſcovers, that the Worms that ſpoke the

we find daily leſs Fondneſs for Life, leſs Earneſtneſs for Trifles, leſs Deſire of Applauſe, leſs Eagerneſs of Profit, & leſs Concern for whatever is moſt eſteemd, by the World. (1)

This is the true Mortification of the Fleſh, with its Affections and Luſts. This is the Way to die to this World and to live unto God. And, when we are dead to this World, the Fear of dying, and leaving it will ceaſe; for what ſhould a Man do in this World, who is dead to it, and to all things therein; So when we are alive to God, nothing can be ſo deſireable as to go to him; for here we live only to God by Faith and

(1) If we conſider the Reaſon why Death is ſo terrible to moſt Men, we ſhall find that their Unwillingneſs to leave this World, occaſioned by that great Fondneſs & Paſſion, which the Generality of Mankind retain for this preſent Life; inſomuch, that whatever glorious things they hear of a future State, they, being "of the Earth, earthy," only like what they ſee; and not expecting to better their Condition, chuſe to ſtay in this Life; ſo that it is a double Death to them, when taken from their darling Pleaſures. See Note (2) page 292, 293.

In this Caſe, nothing would be more effectual to moderate our Deſires for things of this Nature, whilſt we are alive and well, than ſeriouſly to reflect, in what Light they will appear to us, at the Point of Death. No one can be more miſerable than thoſe, who ſeldom think of any thing beyond this World, when they are not to continue any longer in it.

The Poor have not the leaſt Reaſon to envy the Rich, eſpecially with Reſpect to Death, for we all know that thoſe who increaſe the Endearments of Life, alſo increaſe the Fears of Death. The poor Man has no Grief for what he leaves behind, but the Rich, and particularly the *Covetous*, muſt feel great Pain at being obliged to leave ſo much behind them. We ſhould therefore, &c. [under]

and Hope; whereas, the Place, where God dwells, is the proper Place for this divine Life.

Another thing to be adviſed here, is, the bearing our Sickneſs, that precedes it, with a true chriſtian Frame and Temper of Mind; with great Patience under our Sufferings, and Reſignation of Mind to the Will of God; with a firm Truſt & Dependence upon his infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and with thankful Acknowledgments of thoſe Mercies with which he allays the Sorrows of our Diſtemper, and lightens the Burthen under which we labour; carefully reſtraining all Murmurings againſt God, or any Diſcontent, by Reaſon of it; watching againſt all the Temptations to Anger, ſuch as the Miſtakes and Inadvertencies of thoſe about us, the unſeaſonable Kindneſs of our Friends, the Diſagreeableneſs of our Medicines, &c. and curbing anxious Fears of worſe than may come to paſs, and, being content to wait God's Time for our Deliverance, we muſt quiet our Minds under the Apprehenſions of future Evils, by conſidering that we are in the Hands of a good God, who will lay no more upon us than we are able to bear; and who will in his due Time either remove what afflicts us, or give us Strength to endure it in ſuch a Manner, that it may contribute to the Improvement of our Virtue here, & the Increaſe of our Happineſs hereafter. Serm. LXXX. Can

Can we reflect upon the Day of Diſſolution approaching, when every ſublunary Hope ſhall ceaſe, and every worldly Project vaniſh, as a Shadow; Can we ſurvey the ſolemn Manſions of the Dead, where the mingling Duſt beſpeaks the Folly of all earthly Preeminence and Honour; (1) and yet purſue, with unremitted Chace, the fleeting Vanities of Life; & indulge, with unrelenting Hearts, the angry Paſſions which torture human Peace, and deſtroy our beſt Repoſe? Nay, and can it be poſſible that we ſhould look beyond the Grave, and recollect that an Exiſtence everlaſting awaits us, and not uſe every wiſe & rational Method to ſecure to our Souls the Comforts of that Exiſtence, when Time ſhall have cloſed upon us, and we ſhall bid an eternal Adieu to all things below. (2)

T

(1) Tho Death levels all Diſtinctions, & pays no more Deference to the Crown, than to the unnoticed Head of the meaneſt Peaſant; yet the Great ſeem willing to preſerve, even in Death, that Diſtinction which they have ſhared in Life; & refuſe to mix their ſocial Duſt with common and inferior Clay. See No. 26. of the Spectator.

There may be a Propriety in this; Subordination is abſolutely neceſſary; and it may be decent, that they who have been elevated in this Life, ſhould, at the Cloſe, keep up their due Dignity and Diſtinction; receiving the juſt Tribute of Praiſe from the Living, and as an encouraging Excitement in well-doing to thoſe that come after.

(2) There is no Diſtinction of Perſons in the Grave. When I look upon the Tombs of the Great, every Emotion of Envy dies in me

Whe

To fit and prepare ourſelves for a holy and happy Death ought to be the great Care of every ſerious Chriſtian, becauſe a Miſtake in this Matter is irrecoverable. We can die but once, and eternal Happineſs, or eternal Miſery muſt be the Conſequence of it. — Were we aſſured that in a few Years we ſhould be deprived of all our preſent Poſſeſſions, & ſhould not ſurvive the Loſs of them for a much longer Period of Time; how careful ſhould we be to provide in the Years of Plenty for thoſe of Famine; and how inexcuſable ſhould we think the Prodigal that waſted thoſe Stores which he might lay up, ſleeping in Eaſe and Security, without reflecting on the Years which he muſt ſpend in Want & Miſery? Yet how inadequately does this repreſents the Infatuation

(1) Since Death puts an End to our Days, in which we are to ſerve God, and prepare for Eternity, & determines our future State forever; and knowing that this Death comes but once, it is of infinite Conſequence, that when Death comes, we may be well prepared for his Summons into Eternity. And who is the Perſon that would not take the utmoſt Caution in doing That, which can be done only once in his whole Life, and on which the Happineſs of his whole Life depends? No Error can be corrected in what is to be done but once; & all that Perſon hope for Pardon, who permits Death to ſurpriſe him; and falls into the Grave without Thought of Futurity? Or, what is worſe, not only neglects, but, perhaps, makes a Jeſt of Sin, and defies God and his Judgments? A wiſe Man will uſe great Caution in making an Experiment, that can never be tried a ſecond Time, & which,

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tuation of those who pass their Days secure and undisturbed; without molesting themselves with the Inquiry what Part they are to have in that Eternity to come; that Eternity to which this Life, however protracted with all its Pleasures, Pomps, and Vanities, is in Proportion literally nothing? — Certainly if any thing can awaken us into Sense and Reason, one but transient View of this dreadful Precipice before us must do it. (1)

Another

When I read the Epitaphs of the Beautiful, every inordinate Desire goes out; - When I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tomb-Stone, my Heart melts with Compassion; - When I see the Tombs of Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must soon follow; - When I see Kings lying by those who deposed them, When I see Rival-Wits placed Side by Side, Or the holy Men that divided the World with their Contests and Disputes, I reflect with Sorrow and Astonishment on the little Competitions, Factions and Debates of Mankind; - When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of one that died Yesterday, some for Ages before, I consider that great Day, when we shall all of us be Cotemporaries, and make our Appearance together.

(1) Since Death puts an End to our Days, in which we are to serve God, and prepare for Eternity, & determines our future State forever; and knowing that this Death comes but once, it is of infinite Consequence, that when Death comes, we may be well prepared for his Summons into Eternity. And who is the Person that would not take the utmost Caution in doing That, which can be done only once in his whole Life, and on which the Happiness of his whole Life depends? No Error can be corrected in what is to be done but once; & shall that Person hope for Pardon, who permits Death to surprise him; and falls into the Grave without Thought of Futurity? Or, what is worse, not only neglects, but, perhaps, makes a Jest of Sin, and defies God and his Judgments? A wise Man will use great Caution in making an Experiment, that can never be tried a second Time, & which,

Another Remedy againſt the Fear of Death is Meditation. We become acquainted with the moſt dreadful things by Cuſtom and Converſation. The FIRST Conceits of Death commonly terrify us, but when we ſeriouſly meditate upon it, we ſhall ſeek it boldly in its Retreats.

Want of Conſideration, is, in moſt Men, a greater, and more general Defect, than Want of Knowledge. It is for Want of bringing theſe things home to ourſelves, and meditating upon them, that we are ſurprized at their Approach - for well may that Death be called SUDDEN, which comes upon us, tho' at the lateſt Hour, before we have once thought on it.

That we may not, therefore, be afraid of Death, let us meditate on it, and expect it at all Times. Let us conſider it as certain and inevitable, as to FACT; tho' as to Time, uncertain. - The FIRST will arm us to bear with Reſolution what cannot be avoided - and the LATTER will keep us in a conſtant Preparation for it, as being uncertain of the Time of its Approach. And! to heighten all, let us conſider the Bleſſings and Benefits which it brings upon us, - delivering us from all the Pains and Evils of this

if it fail, will be of the greateſt Detriment to him: This is the Caſe of all Men, in Regard of Death: We can die but once, and, if we miſcarry that once, we are undone forever.

this World, and introducing us among the Saints & Citizens of Heaven, being the End of our Salvation, and the Accompliſhment of our Redemption: for, "Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord, even ſo ſaith the Spirit, for they reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them;" - "They are with the Lord, and the Care of them is with the Moſt-High."

The laſt Inſtruction which this Subject points out, reſpects the Manner in which all wiſe & good Men ought to ſtand affected towards Life and Death.

As we ought not to be ſeverely attatched to the One, ſo we have no Reaſon abjectedly to dread the Other. Life is the Gift of God, which we may juſtly cheriſh and hold dear: indeed, we are bound by all fair Means to guard and preſerve it, that we may continue to be uſeful in THAT Poſt of Duty in which Providence has placed us.

Wherever Religion, Virtue, or true Honour, call us forth to Danger, Life ought to be hazarded without Fear. There is a generous Contempt of Death which ſhould diſtinguiſh thoſe who live and walk by the Faith of Immortality. This is the Source of Courage in a Chriſtian: his Behaviour ought to ſhow the Elevation of his Soul above the preſent World, and to diſcover the Liberty which he poſ-

ſeſſes of following the native Sentiments of his Mind, without any of thoſe Reſtraints which the Fear of Death impoſes on vicious Men.

At the ſame Time, this rational Contempt of Death muſt carefully be diſtinguiſhed from that inconſiderate and thoughtleſs Indifference, with which ſome have affected to treat it. This is what cannot be juſtified on any Principle of Reaſon whatever.

Human Life is no Trifle, which Men may freely part with at Pleaſure. Death, in every View, is an important Event. It is the moſt ſolemn Criſis of the human Exiſtence. A good Man has reaſon to meet it with a calm and firm Mind: but no Man is entitled to treat it with oſtentateous Levity. It calls for manly Seriouſneſs of Thought. It requires all the Recollection of which we are capable; that with the proper Diſpoſition of dependent Beings, when "the Duſt is about to return to the Earth as it was, the Spirit may return to God who gave it."

Sermon

SERMON LXXXI.

On the Reſurrection.

1 Cor. xv. 52.

"The Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible."

If in the preſent Circle of Vanity there can be an Enquiry of more than ordinary Concernment to us, it muſt be THIS, what is to become of us after our Departure out of it.

We ſee with our Eyes daily Examples, and our Fathers have told us infinitely more, of the bounded Extent of human Life, ſo that from the leaſt Conſideration of our State, we can hardly miſs of the ſtriking, tho' familiar Reflexion, that "we muſt die like Men," and as certainly draw after thoſe that are already gone, as there have been innumerable before them, "it being appointed unto Men once to die." (1) But,

Muſt theſe Bodies of ours, which will in their Day be brought to the Grave, forever remain in the Duſt?

(1) The preceeding Diſcourſe.

Duſt? muſt all our Thoughts alſo periſh with them, and our whole Being from thenceforward be extinct? may not theſe decayed Fabricks be once more raiſed and animated by that thinking Soul within us, which at preſent actuates the whole Man? And, if ſo, into what Condition will this Re-union finally introduce us? ſhall our Bodies and Souls then again come together for the better, or for the worſe?

Theſe are Queſtions of the utmoſt Importance, and in which the Text gives us ample Solution "The Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible."

As we are not to continue here forever, ſo neither are we to reſt always in the Duſt. Death is more than the Concluſion of human Life. It is the Gate which, at the ſame Time, that it cloſes on this World, opens into Eternity.

The Reſurrection of the Body being, in a great Meaſure, a novel Doctrine (1) at the firſt Promulgation of the Goſpel, met with very conſiderable Oppoſition. When Paul preached it at Athens, many mocked at him, and even the Philoſophers looked

(1) Whatever Notion the Jews had of it, (which it is probable amounted at furtheſt to no more than a re-embodying of the Soul without Regard to Identity, &c.) it is certain that the Doctrine was entirely new to the Heathen World, whoſe *Tartarus* and *Elyſium* were filled only with aerial Spectrums.

looked on him in the contemptible Light of a Babler, and a "Setter-forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he preached Jeſus, and a Reſurrection." Among the Jews themſelves, there was a whole Sect of Men, who ſaid there was "no Reſurrection," (1) and who pretended to reject it upon the Principles of Speculation. But,

Theſe Men "did err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the Power of God:" they had neither attended to the clear Diſcoveries with which they were ſupplied from Revelation, nor to thoſe ſtrong and concluſive Arguments in this behalf, which might have been drawn from Reaſon and the Nature of things.

In ſpeaking, therefore, to the Words before us I ſhall

Firſt, prove from them the Reſurrection of the Dead. "The Dead ſhall be raiſed." And then,

II. (For the greater Confirmation of our Faith in ſo important an Article of the Chriſtian Religion,) anſwer the Objections which have been alledged againſt

(1) The Sadducees. The Founder of this Sect was one Sadoc, about two hundred and fifty Years before Chriſt; who ignorantly or wickedly miſinterpreting the generous Doctrine of his Maſter Antigonus, that "Piety ought to be founded ſolely on the Love of God, and not in the ſervile & mercinary Views of Reward," from thence taught that no Reward was to be expected, &c. Serm. LXXXI.

againſt it. And, having by this Means eſtabliſhed the Doctrine in Queſtion, I ſhall proceed,

III. To point-out the advantageous Qualities wherewith we ſhall then be inveſted. "The Dead ſhall be raiſed INCORRUPTIBLE."

Concluding with ſuch Inferences as ſhall naturally reſult from the Whole.

Whoever rejects the Doctrine of a Reſurrection muſt do it for one of theſe Reaſons [viz] either that he looks upon it as impoſſible, or as improbable & unneceſſary; or laſtly, as not ſufficiently revealed and warranted by Scripture.

That the Dead will be raiſed, I ſhall prove theſe two Ways, Firſt from Reaſon; and then 2dly, from Scripture.

By Natural Light, indeed, we cannot diſcover that God will raiſe the Dead, for that depending upon the Will of God, can no otherwiſe be known than by his own Declarations, (1) Yet this Doctrine, when

(1) Though we may conclude the Reſurrection of the Body to be poſſible, from that Immenſity of Power inſeparable from a Being infinite in all Perfections; yet the infallible Certainty of the Reſurrection muſt be built upon the Declaration of God's Will and Pleaſure to effect it.

when made known by Revelation, evidently contains nothing in it contrary to right Reason.

If a Resurrection be impossible, it must be so either with Respect to the Agent; or to the Subject, or Patient; (i.e) either that the constituent Parts of the Body are by Death so effectually disunited, that they are incapable of being reunited: or else at least that it is a Work of so much Difficulty, that there is not any Being of Power and Activity sufficient to effect it. But,

With Respect to the Subject it is certain that Man at his Death returns at worst, but to the same Principles from which he was first raised by Creation; and if Dust were THEN capable of an Union with "the Breath of Life," why not again? And why not indeed at all Times, and on all Occasions, how often soever they should be separated? If that which confessedly did once not exist, hath actually risen into Being, how much rather must we conclude that which hath a visible Existence to be capable of a Restoration, tho' for a while that Existence seem to be lost. (1) If

(1) Το ουκ ον εγενηθη, το δε ον η πολυ μαλλον γενεσθαι, was the favourite Argument of one Gabias Ben Pesica, a Jew, who was cotemporary with Simon the just, about 300 Years before Christ. — It may here therefore be asked, how could such a thing be conceived by Gabias, if

If it be aſked, where will the Duſt be found? undoubtedly ſomewhere within the Circuit of created Nature; for, to ſuppoſe it to be entirely loſt, were to ſuppoſe an abſolute Annihilation, of ſomething which was once actually in Being: but, a Reſurrection with all its Difficulties may as reaſonably be admitted as this. Annihilation is a Taſk which requires the Interpoſition of Omnipotence equally with any Part of that Work; for MATTER tho it hath a perpetual Tendency to Alteration, and is continually paſſing from one Stage or Shape to another, hath yet no kind of Propenſity to give up its Exiſtence: - Expel it from the Earth, the Air is ready to receive it: hence we may traoe it thro Water, or even Fire itſelf, back to EARTH again. Somewhere, however, it will be, and, after a Revolution of even a Century of Centuries be as capable of conſtituting the Subſtance of the human Body, as it was the firſt Hour it was employed to that Purpoſe in the mighty Work of the Creation.

What hinders, then, the very ſame Particles which ſhall be diſunited by Death, from being again united in the very ſame Manner as before, except that

the Doctrine of a future State were ſo abſolutely a Stranger to the Jewiſh Theology as ſome would perſuade us it was?

that it be a Work of ſo much Difficulty, that there cannot be found a Being capable of effecting it? — Now here,

St Paul, in his Defence before King AGRIPPA, puts the Queſtion, "Why ſhould it be thought a thing INCREDIBLE with you, that GOD ſhould raiſe the Dead?" (1)

Nothing can be ſaid to be incredible if there is a Power

(1) Though we muſt all die, yet the Soul will not die, and as to the Body, though it be diſſolved, it is not reduced to nothing, but the Particles remain; and that it is credible that theſe ſhould be re-united at the general Reſtitution appears from properly reflecting on the Omniſcience of God. Although the Particles of Matter of which our Bodies are compoſed ſhould, after being reduced into Duſt, be blown about by ſeveral Winds, digeſted into the Bodies of other Creatures, and tranſmuted into ten thouſand Forms and Shapes, yet the Lord knows where they are, whether in the Earth or Sea, [illegible] the Reaſon and Experience, that there is One who can: & what can induce us to ſuppoſe, that he cannot give Life to a Body a ſecond Time, who we certainly know gave Life to it at firſt?

Theſe Prejudices, therefore, we may ſafely refer to the Power of the Almighty, to which all Nature is obedient, and upon which we may ſecurely depend for the Performance of divine Promiſes, how unpromiſing ſoever the Circumſtances may ſeem to be which attend them. When the Sadducees denied the Reſurrection, our Saviour told them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God:" intimating plainly, that for the Security and Certainty of our Reſurrection we muſt truſt to Scripture, and the Declaration of God's Purpoſe contained in it; and for the Method and Means of bringing this great Work to paſs we muſt rely on the Power of God.

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the Earth, Air, or Sea; and though the Duſt of Millions of Generations were thus ſcattered, God's all diſcerning Eye can diſtinguiſh every Particle of Matter which belongs to each reſpective Body. 3dly, From a View of God's *Omnipotence*; he that made the World out of nothing, can ſurely by one commanding Voice collect and join together what belongs to the Body of every One, and unite the Soul alſo to it. — The Prejudices, &c. [under]

The Prejudices that affect Men moſt, when they conſider this Article of the Reſurrection, ariſe from the weakeſt of all Imaginations, that they can judge from the ſettled Laws and Courſe of Nature, what is or is not poſſible to the Power of God. It is very true, that all our Powers are bounded by the Laws of Nature; but does it follow that his Power muſt be bounded, who appointed theſe Laws of Nature, & could have appointed others, if he had thought fit? We cannot raiſe a dead Body; it is againſt the Laws of Nature, which we cannot ſurpaſs. Neither can we make or create a new Man; but we certainly know, from Reaſon and Experience, that there is One who can: & what can induce us to ſuppoſe, that he cannot give Life to a Body a ſecond Time, who we certainly know gave Life to it at firſt?

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Power in any Perſon able to effect it; for, if there is ſuch a Power, That Power may bring into Exiſtence the very thing which we doubt of. And,

That this very Power is in God, cannot be doubted (1). If it depended on us, it would be incredible, indeed; But it is the Work of God, and him only; and ſurely He is of Credit and Power ſufficient for this great Event. (2)

If it be incredible that God ſhould raiſe the Dead, it muſt be upon One of theſe two Accounts, either becauſe he CANNOT, or becauſe he WILL NOT do it. For what God both CAN and WILL do, is ſo far from being incredible, that it is a moſt undoubted Truth.

That God is certainly able to raiſe the Dead, is a thing credible in itſelf; — and therefore, ought to be eſteemed incredible by no Sort of Men whatſoever, tho' they have no Knowledge of any Revealed Religion, if they have but right Apprehenſions concerning God. — Now,

(1) where we are ſure that God declares the thing, let us leave it to Him to overcome every Difficulty, that may ſeem to attend the Manner in which it ſhall be effected.

(2) When thoſe Propoſitions in Religion which are properly termed Myſteries, are offered to ſome Men, they eagerly refuſe to aſſent to them. Why? Becauſe they are impoſſible? Surely no; for if they be, there is no God: for either he is not, or He is Πας ο Δυνατος, equal to every Taſk. If we loſe one Attribute of the Divinity, farewell the reſt.

No Man can have a true Notion of God, but he muſt know that God is a Being of infinite Power and Wiſdom; - that he made the World and all things in it; - that he preſerves and ſuſtains all Creatures, and that all things are wholly at his Will and Diſpoſal, to do with them as he pleaſes; - that nothing can oppoſe or reſiſt his Will, or give him the leaſt Hindrance in any thing which he is pleaſed to undertake. Now,

How were theſe Particles firſt united? By whom were they firſt collected, and diſpoſed in their preſent Form and Order? By whatever Means this was once effected, ſurely by the very ſame Way it may be effected again: But if this Means was God, if he were the firſt Author of our Compoſition; then is God every Way qualified to renew the Work, and to reſtore the ſcattered Particles of our Subſtance to that Form, which himſelf only firſt impreſſed upon them. In proof of which we find that any regular and ingenious Machine, (after compoſed,) is eaſier refitted & replaced as to its ſeveral Members, whenever, either by Deſign or Accident, they ſhall happen to be diſunited, than firſt made. In ſuch a Caſe, what Artificer, of a moderate Expertneſs, is at a Loſs how to proceed, whence to collect his ſeveral Materials, or what Order to purſue in the Rejunction of

them? But If you give to this Artificer Omniſcience & Omnipotence, what will then be an Over-Match for his Skill, or what Part of his Work ſhall have Difficulty enough but for a Moment to impede his Progeſs? (1)

This able Artificer is God, who, after Death, diſpoſes of our ſeveral Members in his Repoſitory, from whence he can immediately recall them, when Occaſion ſhall require: for whatever ſeems loſt to us, is by no Means ſo to Him; nor is it the Spirit only which returns to him, but even the earthly Tabernacle itſelf, each having its proper Receptacle, the former in the Boſom of Abraham, the latter in various Situations; a While perhaps in humid, a While in igneous Bodies; yet ſtill within the Eye of God, who uſes theſe but as his Veſſels or Reſervoirs for that Purpoſe, and to whom they ſhall be obliged to render back the Depoſitum on Demand. (2)

With

(1) *Utiquè idoneus eſt reficere qui fecit.* He who formed, can ſurely reform. A Word brought them at firſt together. A Breath diſſolves them. What is there wanting to bring them together again, that is not in the Power of Him, whoſe very Breath is pregnant with Creation or Annihilation?

(2) "I will command the Fiſhes, and they ſhall vomit up the Bones which they have devoured, and I will reſit Joint to Joint, and Bone to Bone." — This is cited by Tertullian as Scripture; but where

With Reſpect, then, to the Recovery of the Materials, there will be nothing wanting to our Reſtoration: for why ſhould our "Subſtance" be THEN "hid from him," any more than it was when we were "made in Secret, and curiouſly wrought in the lower Parts of the Earth; his Eyes ſaw it while it was yet imperfect, and in his Book were all our Members written, which in Continuance were faſhioned, when as yet there was none of them?" Why ſhould they be at any Time leſs viſible, or how indeed, can they be any where concealed from that Eye, before which "Hell itſelf is open, and Deſtruction hath no Covering?"

How, then, can it ſeem incredible that God ſhould raiſe the Dead to Life again, when he at firſt gave them Life and Being? If God has given us the Life which we now enjoy, what ſhould hinder him from reſtoring Life again after it is deſtroyed? Can there be more Difficulty in giving Life the ſecond Time, than there was at firſt? Certainly He who created, can with Eaſe renovate. Indeed, (humanly ſpeaking,)

had it, is uncertain; at leaſt, it is no where in our Canon. His comment upon it is this; "The Beaſts and Fiſhes are expreſly mentioned in the Reſtitution of the Fleſh & Blood, in Order to expreſs the more ſtrongly, the Reſurrection of thoſe Bodies which have been deured; ſince Reſtitution is demanded of thoſe Animals who devoured em."

ing,) there ſeems much greater Facility in the latter, than in the former; and therefore, ſince we muſt acknowledge the original Formation of our Bodies to have been of God, we have abundant Cauſe to be aſſured, that he can after Death, form them anew, whenever he pleaſes. (1)

Might we not as well diſpute that it is impoſſible for a Man to be born, as that it is impoſſible for him to be raiſed from the Dead, if our own Experience did not convince us of That, but not of This? God, who gave all that Power and Ability which natural Cauſes have to produce their Effects, may, if he pleaſes, produce the ſame Effects immediately by himſelf. For,

It is not becauſe he ſtands in Need of any Help from natural Cauſes, that he has appointed them, but becauſe it ſeemed beſt to his infinite Wiſdom to appoint this Courſe and Order in the World.

It is evident even to natural Reaſon, (as the World at firſt had a Beginning,) that there muſt have been ſome firſt Parents of Mankind, who were immed-

(1) He who made that which was not, to be; can certainly make that which once was, to be again. See Note (1) page 323. This hath the Force of a Demonſtration; for no Man that believes that God hath done the one, can make any Doubt but that he can, if he pleaſes; do the other alſo.

immediately created by God, and therefore, could not be born of others, as Men are since.

Since, then, Man must of Necessity have been first formed by God himself, and not have come by a natural Birth into the World, it is evident that God might have made the Whole of our Race after this Manner, if he had pleased; - He therefore, who is the Author of our Nature, may act without it, and as much above and beyond any natural Powers and Faculties in his Creatures, as it seems best to Him.

It may as well be thought incredible that God should at first make Man, as that he should be able to raise him up again after Death: for Death is only the End of Nature's Power of working, not of the Power of God himself; who, as he originally made the Race of Mankind, so he appointed the Nature of things, and gave it a limited Power, which it cannot exceed; but his Power is infinite and hath no Bounds.

When a Man is once Dead, Nature is at an End with him, and can never recover him to Life again, for God ordained at first, that according to the Course of Nature he should only be born, and live here a while;

But, he hath not so confined himself, that he cannot give Life to the Dead, but has reserved This as

his own Prerogative above the Power of Nature, who, having formed Adam of the Duſt of the Ground, might have formed all Mankind ſo, if he had pleaſed - and therefore can as eaſily raiſe all Mankind to Life again out of the Duſt, as he made the firſt Man out of it.

The Atheiſt, therefore, has, of all Men, the leaſt Pretence to ſcruple the Reſurrection of the Dead, who muſt ſuppoſe that Mankind at firſt ſprang out of the Earth, as Plants, by a ſpontaneous Production; and for him to pretend that the Bodies of Men cannot be raiſed to Life again by an almighty Power, is as unreaſonable, as any thing in Atheiſm itſelf, can be. — In a Word,

If there be any Contradiction in the Notion of a Reſurrection, there muſt be the ſame alſo in the Notion of Creation; & therefore, Natural Religion is juſt as much concerned in this Point, as Revelation itſelf is. For, tho' the Belief of the Fact, that the Dead ſhall be raiſed, depends on Revelation, yet our Belief that God has Power to raiſe the Dead, depends not on Revelation, but on the clear Dictates of that Reaſon, by which we diſcover Him to be our Creator. — Now, if this be doubted even of his Power of Creation, we muſt then bid Adieu at once to all Religion; for, if God created not the World,

World, how is Man then, at all related to him? If he did not make us, what Right has he to govern us, or what Pretence to our Obedience? Neither the Deiſt from Nature, nor We from Revelation, can, in this Caſe, be ever ſatisfied.

To ſay that it is contrary to Nature and Experience is talking very unphiloſophically; for, how many things are there in ſome Parts of the World, which appear contrary to Nature and Experience in others? (1)

In Order to clear this Difficulty, it is deſired to conſider what this Courſe of Nature, is; every Man, from the loweſt Peaſant to the higheſt Philoſopher frames to himſelf from his Experience and Obſervation a Notion of a Courſe of Nature, and is ready to ſay of every thing reported to him that contradicts his Experience, that it is contrary to Nature; – But, will it be ſaid that every thing is impoſſible, or even improbable, that contradicts the Notion which Men frame to themſelves of the Courſe of Nature? If ſo, we muſt be Infidels to many Facts of undoubted Exiſtence

(1) The Solidity of frozen Water hath been accounted contrary to Nature in warmer Countries; as well as the Fluidity of hard Metals to many, who are unacquainted with the Art of making them fuſil. Preſumptions are of no Weight againſt poſitive Evidence.

Exiſtence; for many things in ſome Countries are abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Notion which Men have of the Courſe of Nature who live in other Climates; and hence it appears, that when Men talk of the Courſe of Nature, they really talk of their own Prejudices and Imaginations, and that Senſe and Reaſon are not ſo much concerned in the Caſe as is pretended. For,

We aſk; Is it from the Evidence of Senſe, or the Evidence of Reaſon, that People of WARM Climates think it contrary to Nature, that Water ſhould grow ſolid, and become Ice? As for Senſe, they ſee indeed, that Water with them is always liquid, but none of their Senſes tell them that it can never grow ſolid; - As for Reaſon, it can never ſo inform them, for right Reaſon can never contradict the Truth of things.

Our Senſes, then, inform us rightly what the uſual Courſe of things is; but when we conclude that things cannot be otherwiſe, we out-run the Information of our Senſes, and the Concluſion ſtands upon Prejudice, and not upon Reaſon; and yet ſuch Concluſions form what is generally called the Courſe of Nature; - and when Men, upon proper Evidence and Information, admit things contrary to this preſuppoſed Courſe of Nature, they do not, (as

the

the Expreſſion is,) "quit their own Senſes and Reaſon," but in Truth, only their own Miſtakes and Prejudices.

In the Caſe before us, the Caſe of the Reſurrection, the great Difficulty ariſes from the like Prejudice. We all know by Experience that all Men die & riſe no more: therefore we conclude, that for a Dead Man to riſe to Life again, is contrary to the Courſe of Nature: - And certainly it is contrary to the uniform and ſettled Courſe of things; but if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real Laws of Nature, & abſolutely impoſſible on that Account, we argue without any Foundation to ſupport us, either from our Senſes, or our Reaſon.

We cannot learn from our Eyes, or Feeling, or any other Senſe, that it is impoſſible for a dead Body to live again; If we learn it at all, it muſt be from our Reaſon; and yet, what one Maxim of Reaſon is contradicted by the Suppoſition of a Reſurrection? (1) For

(1) It was upon this Account that the Reſurrection of the Body was thought impoſſible by the Heathen Philoſophers, becauſe they thought it contrary to the Courſe of Nature, that there ſhould be any Return from a perfect Privation to a Habit, and that a Body perfectly dead ſhould be reſtored to Life again. An Effect of this Sort from any Action or Operation whatever among the Works of Nature they had never obſerved, and therefore thought it impoſſible. Indeed,

The Heathens generally, even thoſe who believed the Immortality

For my own Part, when I conſider how we live; - that all animal Motions neceſſary to Life, are independent of our Will - that our Hearts beat without our Conſent, and without our Direction; - that Digeſtion and Nutrition are performed by Methods to which we are not conſcious; - that our Blood moves in a perpetual Round, which is contrary to all known Laws

of the Soul and another State after this Life, looked upon the Reſurrection of the Body, as a thing impoſſible. Pliny reckons it among thoſe things which God himſelf cannot do; *Revocare Defunctos*, to call back the Dead to Life. — And,

In the primitive Times, the Heathen Philoſophers very much derided the Chriſtians upon the Account of this ſtrange Doctrine, the Reſurrection; looking always upon this Article of their Faith, as a ridiculous and impoſſible Aſſertion. — Accordingly,

When St. Paul preached to the Philoſophers at Athens, and declared to them the Reſurrection of *Jeſus* from the Dead, they were amazed at his Doctrine. "He ſeemeth, (ſay they,) to be a Setter-forth of ſtrange Gods." The Reſurrection was a thing ſo remote from their Apprehenſions, that they had no Manner of Conception of it; but underſtood him as declaring to them two new Deities, [viz] *Jeſus* and *Anaſtaſis*; as if he had brought a new God and Goddeſs among them, *Jeſus* and the *Reſurrection*. — And,

When he diſcourſed to them again more fully of this Matter, it is ſaid, that "when they heard of the Reſurrection of the Dead, they mocked." So eaſy is it for Prejudice to blind the Minds of Men, and to repreſent every thing to them, which hath great Appearance of Difficulty in it, as impoſſible. Tho' it muſt be acknowledged that ſome of the wiſeſt of them thought it not only poſſible, but probable; as Zoroaſter, among the Chaldeans; Theopompus, among the Followers of Ariſtotle; and almoſt all the Stoicks, as they are quoted by Grotius.

Laws of Motion, I cannot but think that the Preſervation of our Lives, in every Moment of them, is as great an Act of Power as is neceſſary to raiſe a dead Man to Life again; – and Whoever ſo far reflects upon his own Being, as to acknowledge that he owes it to a ſuperior Power, muſt needs think that the ſame Power which gave Life to ſenſeleſs Matter at FIRST, and ſet all the Springs and Movements a going at the Beginning, can reſtore Life to a dead Body; for ſurely, it is not a greater thing to give Life to a Body ONCE Dead, than to a Body that never was alive. In Truth,

We deny that a Reunion of a Soul to a dead Body is contrary to Nature and right Reaſon – ſince Tradition, general Expectation, & many Facts (1), have made

(1) Witneſs the raiſing the Widow's Son by Elijah. 1 Kings, xvii. 17, &c.
— of the Child of the Shunamite by Eliſha. 11 Kings, 4th Chap.
— of the dead Man in Eliſha's Grave. 11 Kings, xiii. 21.
— of the Ruler's Daughter. Matt. ix. 18, &c.
— of the Widow's Son. Luke vii. 12, &c.
— of Lazarus. John, the 11th Chapter.
} by Jeſus.
— of Tabitha. Acts ix. 36, &c.
— and of Eutichus. Acts xx. 9, &c.
} by Peter. & Paul.

Beſides the "many Bodies of the Saints, which ſlept, that aroſe, and came out of their Graves, after our Saviour's Reſurrection, and went into the holy City, & appeared unto many. Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

made Men in all Ages not averſe to ſuch a Belief.

Mankind hath been already, (more than once,) indulged with evident Demonſtration of the Poſſibility of the thing: ſeveral Inſtances are recorded in the holy Scriptures, where this difficult Taſk hath been actually effected in the Face of the World; in ONE of which we are told, that the Diſſolution had ſo far taken-place, that the Body was ſuppoſed to be in a State of Putrefaction. Indeed, very numerous, have been the Proofs; for, at our Saviour's Reſurrection, the Bodies of ſeveral holy Men, ſome of whom had been dead perhaps for the Space of ſeveral Centuries, "aroſe out of their Graves," and went and made a publick Appearance in the holy City.

But, The moſt pregnant Evidence in the Poſſibility of ſuch a Reſurrection, (as we now ſpeak of,) is that of our Bleſſed Firſt Fruits, the Lord Jeſus. In the other Caſes, the Return was made but to a ſhort and temporal Life; but "Chriſt being once raiſed from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him."(*).

"Now, if Chriſt be preached" indeed, proved "that he roſe from the Dead," "who ſhall ſay, there is no Reſurrection of the Dead?" - "For if there be no Reſurrection of the Dead," on Account of the Impoſſibility or Difficulty of it, "then is Chriſt not raiſed;"

(*) Reaſon (by many things) ſeems to hint that there may be a Reſurrection, but Revelation alone poſitively aſſerts that "*all the Dead ſhall be raiſed.*" This Truth is expreſsly mentioned or alluded to in many Parts of the Old Teſtament, eſpecially Ezek. xxxvii. 5. Job xix. 25, 26. Iſa. xxvi. 19. Dan. xii. 2, and the Inſtances of the Reſurrection, the Child of the Widow of Zarephath, and of the Shunamite. In the New Teſtament the general Reſurrection of *all*, and a particular Deſcription of ſaints being raiſed, and their Glory, ſo expreſsly mentioned in a great Number of Texts, as (under)

raiſed;" there being no more Impoſſibility that one mortal Body ſhould "put on Immortality," than another: &, (to cut-ſhort the Argument,) "If Chriſt be not riſen," fare-well the whole Scheme of Chriſtianity; "then is our Preaching vain, and our Faith vain alſo." But further,

The Conſideration of things without us, the natural Courſes of Variations in the Creatures, raiſe the Probability of our Reſurrection.

As the Conſideration of the Plants and Flowers of the Field will furniſh us with a ſtriking Picture of Man's Mortality, ſo, on the other Hand, it will ſuggeſt to him the comfortable Aſſurance of his Reſtoration to another Life. When we ſee the annual Returns of Cold ſhut up the Paſſages of Life in Plants, and deprive them of that ſupply of Juices which cauſed them to grow up and flouriſh on the Earth; when the Graſs falleth, and there is no green thing, but every Herb ſhall ſicken and die, and every Tree become a lifeleſs Trunk; and yet when we behold them all revive at the Return of the genial Spring; when we ſee the Face of the Earth renewed in the ſame beautiful Manner it was, and a new Creation, (as it were,) open upon us; why ſhould

w Life, multiplied an hundred-fold, without the leaſt Deviation from s own Form and Body? If thou canſt not tell me this, why doſt thou

made Men in all Ages not averſe to ſuch a Belief.

Mankind hath been already, (more than once) indulged with evident Demonſtration of the Poſſibility of the thing: ſeveral Inſtances are recorded in the holy Scriptures, where this difficult Taſk has been actually effected in the Face of the World; ONE of which we are told, that the Diſſolution had ſo far taken-place, that the Body was ſuppoſed to be in a State of Putrefaction. Indeed, very numerous have been the Proofs; for, at our Saviour's Reſurrection, the Bodies of ſeveral holy Men, ſome of whom had been dead perhaps for the Space of ſeveral Centuries, "aroſe out of their Graves," and went and made a publick Appearance in the holy City.

But, The moſt pregnant Evidence in the Poſſibility of ſuch a Reſurrection, (as we now ſpeak of,) is that of our Bleſſed Firſt Fruits, the Lord Jeſus. In the other Caſes, the Return was made but to a ſhort and temporal Life; but "Chriſt being once raiſed from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him." ✠.

"Now, if Chriſt be preached" indeed, proved

John v. 28. and 29. Acts xxiv. 15. 1 Theſſ. iv. 13. &c. Rev. xx. 12. and 13. and Pſalm, xli. Cor. xv. 20. to the End. Above all, the Reſurrection of Chriſt (who is to be the public Head of his People) is an inconteſtible Preſage of the Reſurrection of all his People. Jeſus roſe as "the Firſt-Fruits of them that ſlept," to mark which, a Number of dead Bodies of Saints aroſe about the ſame Time, who (it ſeems probable) never again returned to Corruption.

should there be any phyſical Difficulties in the Doctrine of a Reſurrection? "why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible, that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?" Is it at all more difficult for him, by an extraordinary Act of his almighty Power, to collect the ſcattered Particles of Duſt, and re-unite them in that Order, Symmetry, and Proportion, which is requiſite to form the human Frame, than it is by a general Law, (which is only the conſtant, but no leſs wonderful, Operation of the ſame Power,) to recall the diſtant and undivided Particles of inactive Matter into ſuch a Diſpoſition and Arrangement, as ſhall give to a Flower the ſame variegated Complexion, & cauſe it to breath the Eſſences it did before? — The incomparable, &c. (under)

The incomparable Diſcourſe of St. Paul, in the Caſe, (1 Cor. xv. 35, &c.) is of eſpecial Service to curb all that vain Curioſity which is ready in Matters of divine Revelation to break-out into an unbecoming Petulence: (1) ſuch Weakneſs muſt be con-

(1) The Illuſtration which St. Paul uſes in Support of the Doctrine of a Reſurrection, and likewiſe as an Argument to put a Stop to all vain and trifling Diſquiſitions concerning the Manner how it ſhall be brought to paſs, is very pertinent and ſtrong: He points out to us a Grain of Corn, that is buried, dead and corrupted in the Earth, and yet ſhoots forth into new Life, and has Life more abundantly: "But, ſome will ſay, How are the Dead raiſed up, and with what Body do they come? Thou Fool! that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened, except it die." As if he had ſaid, "Explain to me, if thou art able, the moſt common Appearance in Nature. Tell me, how the Seed which thou ſoweſt in the Ground, & there periſhes, ſhould, from an unknown and imperceptible Principle, riſe, as it were, again from the Grave into new Life, multiplied an hundred-fold, without the leaſt Deviation from its own Form and Body? If thou canſt not tell me this, why doſt thou

conquered by obſerving the Operations of God in the Works of Nature; where we find him giving to "every Seed, (whether Animal or Vegetable,) ſuch a Body as it hath pleaſed him." Each is proper for its Sphere, and beautiful in its Connection and Order; tho the Degree of their Glory be different.

One Friend or other is continually dropping into the ſilent Grave, and reminding us of our own Mortality, while the returning Seaſons of the Year evidence, in the Renovation and Decays of Nature's brighteſt

foolishly inquire concerning the incomprehenſible Ways of God, in giving Life to the Dead; & why doſt thou perplex thyſelf with impious Doubts, in a Matter which thy own Experience and daily Obſervation will teach thee is not to be conceived or explained?"

This Illuſtration of the Caſe had been before made uſe of by our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, (John, xii. 24.) "Verily, Verily, I ſay unto you, except a Corn of Wheat fall into the Ground and die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

The Proofs of a Reſurrection ſtand upon the moſt ſolid and immoveable Foundations; but Arguments, addreſſed to the Ignorance of Gainſayers, are very proper and ſufficient to ſilence the Petulence of bold and preſumptuous Inquirers, who dare to call in Queſtion the almighty Power of God in the Reſtoration of Life, and yet cannot but ſee ſomething analogous to it, and equally incomprehenſible, in the moſt common Productions of Nature.

Let the falſe Pretender to Philoſophy diſtract himſelf with needleſs Queſtions, which are far above the Reach of the human Capacity to reſolve. The good and humble Chriſtian can eaſily ſatisfy himſelf, by leaving every inexplicable Difficulty to God himſelf, whoſe infinite Power over the Works of his own Hands is not to be meaſured or limited by the narrow Conceptions of vain and aſpiring Man.

brighteſt Scenes, the Poſſibility, (I may ſay the Certainty,) of a general Reſurrection. The Day dies into Night, and riſes with the Morning; the Summer dies into Winter, when the Earth becomes a general Sepulcher; but when the Spring appears, Nature revives & floriſhes; - The Corn lies buried in the Ground, and being corrupted, revives and multiplies; and can we think that Man, the Lord of all theſe things that die and revive for him, ſhould be kept under the Bands of Death himſelf?

When we ſee things thus receive a new Life, as it were, according to the Courſe of Nature, we may well conclude, that if ſo ſtrange an Alteration can proceed from natural Cauſes, then ſurely God is able to effect that which is much more wonderful, and to raiſe theſe Bodies of ours, after they are dead.

When the Corn which is ſown in the Earth, "is not quickned except it die," will not revive and grow again and come to Perfection, unleſs it be firſt buryed in the Ground, & undergo great Alterations there; it is a fooliſh thing, (as the Apoſtle argues,) to doubt of the Reſurrection of the Dead, becauſe we cannot underſtand the Way and Manner of it.

Let Men anſwer all the Difficulties in Nature, and it will THEN be Time enough afterwards to diſpute about a Reſurrection. But when we are at a

Loſs about the moſt obvious and common things, it muſt be great Preſumption to deny the Reſurrection becauſe we cannot comprehend it: - When, alaſs! What is there beſides, that we are able to comprehend? - Will we preſume to ſay that God can do nothing, but what we underſtand how it may be done; when every thing we ſee, may inform us that "his Wiſdom is infinite," and "his Ways paſt finding out?" Indeed,

If we underſtood every thing elſe, there might be ſome Pretence to ſcruple the Reſurrection, becauſe we do not underſtand how it ſhall be. - But, when our Ignorance is greater than our Wiſdom in all things, it is the Height of Folly and Perverſeneſs to think ourſelves competent Judges in ſuch a Myſtery as This. — Indeed,

So far are we from being able to make any Eſtimate of God's Power, and ſo far is the Reſurrection from being incredible, becauſe there may be Objections made about it; that if no other Anſwer could be given, This would be ſufficient, that God can do more than we can have the leaſt Thought or Conception of; and that it is no Argument that he cannot do, what we cannot conceive how it ſhould be done. So long as there is nothing contrary to the divine Nature in it, nor which implies a Contradiction,

tion, the Doctrine of the Reſurrection is credible.

But further, If we conſider the Principles of the human Nature, the Parts of which we conſiſt, it is not conceivable that this preſent Life is proportioned to our Compoſition.

Philoſophers and the Vulgar, Pagans and Chriſtians, have diſtinguiſhed between the Soul and Body of Man. By the Light of Nature alone, Men have been enabled to look through the dark earthly Tabernacle with which the human Mind is encompaſſed, and to diſcern the ſpiritual Inhabitant within. Who does not ſee that ſuch Life and Activity, ſuch an Extent and Vigour of Imagination, ſuch Clearneſs and Penetration of Reaſon, and ſuch earneſt Aſpirations after Virtue and Immortality, can never be the genuine Properties of that heavy Clod which cleaves ſo cloſe to the Earth, and ſinks into it ſo ſoon: and that theſe groſs corporeal Organs are but Slaves in the Service, or rather Inſtruments in the Hand of a much nobler Being?

The Body was framed by God as a Companion for our immaterial and immortal Soul; we can, therefore hardly believe it was deſigned to be made ſo very little Uſe of, as we often find it is; or that it ſhould attend the Soul thro ſo ſhort a Stage only as human Life, leaving her to make the Remainder of an

infinite Progreſs by herſelf. For, by Reaſon of the Shortneſs of our Lives they are quickly ſeparated, ſo that many ignobler Creatures have a much longer Duration; therefore it is very probable that This is not the only Life that belongs to the Sons of Men, and that therefore the Soul continues ſo ſhort a Time with the Body, becauſe it will re-aſſume it. Again,

If we conſider ourſelves as Free-Agents, capable of doing Good or Evil, and ſo thereby liable to Rewards and Puniſhments, it ſeems probable we ſhall riſe to enjoy the One, or ſuffer the Other; for it is not reaſonable to think the Soul alone ſhall be happy or miſerable, becauſe the Laws that are given to us have not only a Reſpect to the Soul, but to the Body alſo, without which in this Life the Soul can neither do nor ſuffer any thing. Again,

If we conſider how large a Share the Body bears in thoſe Tranſactions, by which the future happy or miſerable Being of Man is to be determined; as, on the One hand it were not reaſonable, that the Body ſhould be excluded from all Share in the Reward due to a virtuous and well-ſpent Life; ſo, on the Other hand, it is not to be imagined, that the Soul ſhall be left to ſuſtain ALONE the fatal Conſequents of thoſe Follies, in which ſhe had often, (if not always,) by much

much the leaſt Share and Concern. (1)

It is fit that the Man ſhould be puniſhed that ſinned, and that the Man who lived WELL here, and ſuffered for Righteouſneſs Sake, ſhould be rewarded for it. But, If the Soul only be puniſhed, or the Soul only be rewarded, the Man is not rewarded or puniſhed, for the Soul is but PART of the Man: therefore, it is requiſite that the Soul and Body (which together compoſe the WHOLE Man,) ſhould be re-united. "For, We muſt all appear before the Judgement-Seat of Chriſt, that every One may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad."

For this Reaſon it is requiſite that the Soul ſhould be again united to the ſame Body; otherwiſe the Soul and Body, tho conſtituting a Man, yet would not be the ſame Man that was before, the Body not being the ſame; for it muſt be the ſame Soul and the ſame Body that make the ſame Man. (*)

But, whatever Difficulties of this Kind may remain,

(1) As it will be abſolutely requiſite for the Soul to have ſome clothing in a future State, whether of Happineſs or Miſery, an unembodied Spirit being, perhaps, incapable of either Pleaſure or Pain, therefore, neither are Angels ſuppoſed to be incorporeal Beings, tho' of a more ſubtle and volatile Subſtance than Terreſtrials,) it is more probable that it ſhould reſume its preſent Cloathing, properly modified, than that Recourſe ſhould be had to a new Creation to ſupply the Deficiency.

(*) The human Race, at the general Reſurrection, will not have new, airy, ethereal, or celeſtial Bodies, but that they will have the ſame numerical Bodies which lay in the Grave, is evident, aſ. from [illegible] the Word Reſurrection which ſignifies a raiſing [illegible] if it will not be a Reſurrection, but a Creation only. From [illegible]

infinite Progreſs by herſelf. For, by Reaſon of the Shortneſs of our Lives they are quickly ſeparated, ſo that many ignobler Creatures have a much longer Duration; therefore it is very probable that This is not the only Life that belongs to the Sons of Men, and that therefore the Soul continues ſo ſhort a Time with the Body, becauſe it will re-aſſume it. Again,

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Further Reaſon it is requiſite that the Soul ſhould

(1) the Cross, for it had the Prints of the Nails in his Hands and Feet, and he was felt and handled; now as Christ's Resurrection was an Example of the Saints, we may know, as Scripture says, "that we shall be changed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body." As to some curious Questions as these, whether the Body at the Resurrection will have all the individual Particles it ever had? or whether it will be raised as in Youth, or in Age? as in Health, or as weakened by Distemper at the Time of its Death? these Questions none but God can answer; and would do our Souls no good to know; it is enough that each Body will have its own Stature and such ordinary Parts as will support its Identity. With Respect to the Resurrection of the Bodies of the Wicked, although Scripture does not say so much as that of the Saints, as is done with Respect to the Bodies of Saints, yet it as positively speaks of their Resurrection, and the Difference is chiefly this, that the Saints will be raised by Virtue of their Union with Christ to be completely glorified with him; but the Wicked will be raised merely by the Power of God, to be judged and punished.

main, yet this Article has removed all which lie in the Way of our conſidering ourſelves as accountable Creatures, and ſubject to the future Judgment of God. Whatever we may imagine to be the State of ſeparate Souls; whatever Difficulties may ariſe in conſidering a mere Spirit as accountable for the Actions of this compound Being, Man; they are all out of the Queſtion. It is not a mere Spirit, but the Man himſelf, who is to be judged; and plain Senſe muſt ſee and acknowledge the Reaſonableneſs of judging a Man hereafter for the Crimes committed in this Life, as evidently as it ſees the Reaſonableneſs of judging him here, when his Crimes happen to be detected. So that the Revelation in this Particular, has brought Faith and Common-Senſe to a perfect Agreement. "As in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive:" The ſame Body therefore that died in Adam is to be made alive in Chriſt; "who ſhall change," or transform "our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the mighty Working, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf."

Moſt of the antient Fathers did believe and teach that at the general Reſurrection Men would be reſtored to the very ſame Bodies which were laid in the Grave; This evidently appears from the Heathen's Malice and Envy towards their dead Bodies, which they reduced to Aſhes, and then ſcattered them into the Air and Rivers, thinking thereby to defeat their Hopes of a Reſurrection. Such of the antient Chriſtians as defended or explained this Article of the Reſurrection of the Dead, had generally Recourſe to ſuch Principles & Arguments as ſuppoſe the very ſame Body, Fleſh, and Members to be raiſed again, that the Soul animated in this Life; and, in Truth, this is the moſt plain & eaſy Notion of a Reſurrection. For nothing dies and is corrupted but the Body; the Soul goes upward and returns to God who gave it; and therefore nothing can be properly ſaid to be raiſed again, but only that very Body which died and was corrupted.

The Scripture in many Places aſſures us that the very ſame Fleſh ſhall be raiſed again. If we conſider the ſeveral Inſtances and Examples of thoſe, who either immediately aſcended into Heaven, or after Death were reſtored again to Life, they all ſeem to confirm this Opinion, that we ſhall riſe at the Laſt Day with the very ſame Fleſh and Blood which

When St Paul tells us, that "this corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this mortal ſhall put on Immortality;" he means the Body we now live in, which will one Day lie down in the Duſt. And again he tells us, that our Saviour ſhall "change our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body;" which can only be meant, that this our preſent Body of Fleſh and Blood ſhall be reſtored to Life again. And further, (when arguing againſt Fornication,) he urges, that "the Body is not for Fornication, &c. (under)

[illegible] the Apoſtle's Argument inconcluſive; for, however a Judgement to come might be a Reaſon for keeping our Minds and Conſciences void of Offence, yet, unleſs the Body is to be raiſed, the ſpecial Conſideration of a Reſurrection would be no Reaſon for keeping our Bodies undefiled.

He ſays, indeed, elſewhere, that "Fleſh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." But, leſt his Readers ſhould ſuppoſe him to mean any thing more than Fleſh and Blood in its preſent Condition, and ſhould make him inconſiſtent with himſelf, by extending his Words to our Bodies, when they are tranſformed into the Likeneſs of Chriſt's glorious Body, he immediately informs them, that this corruptible thing which we call Fleſh, or Body, ſhall, at the laſt

main, yet this Article has removed all which lie in the Way of our conſidering ourſelves as accountable Creatures, and ſubject to the future Judgment of God. Whatever we may imagine to be the State of ſeparate Souls; whatever Difficulties may ariſe in we had here. Enoch and Elias were tranſlated to Heaven in their terreſtrial Bodies. And they whom our Saviour recalled to Life, or roſe with him at his Reſurrection, appeared in the ſame Bodies they had before their Diſſolution. Theſe being the Examples and Types of the general Reſurrection, ours therefore muſt reſemble theirs; and we muſt alſo appear at the Laſt Day with the ſame Bodies we lived in here. Even our bleſſed Saviour, who was the Firſt-Fruits of them that ſlept, raiſed his own Body, and appeared to his Diſciples with the very Prints of the Nails in his Hands and Feet, and with all the other Marks of his Crucifixion: "Behold my Hands and my Feet, (ſays he,) that it is I myſelf; handle me and ſee, for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee me have." From whence it ſeems to follow, that in our Reſurrection, we ſhall be conformable to our Saviour's, and reſume the very ſame Bodies that were laid in the Sepulchre. When

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t "the Body is not for Fornication, but for the rd: and God hath raiſed up the Lord, and will o raiſe up us by his own Spirit." But, if we inter- et the Word, Us, in this Place, ſo as to make it an any thing but our Body, we ſhall render the oſtle's Argument inconcluſive; for, however a dgement to come might be a Reaſon for keeping r Minds and Conſciences void of Offence, yet, leſs the Body is to be raiſed, the ſpecial Conſidera- on of a Reſurrection would be no Reaſon for keep- g our Bodies undefiled.

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Day, be ſo changed as to put on Incorruption; and, having diſtinguiſhed between a natural Body, and a Body which has only an animal Life, and a Spiritual Body, or a Body which has ſpiritual Life, he declares that our Bodies, in their preſent Condition, are of the FORMER Sort: &, as to their Condition after the Reſurrection, when they ſhall be of the LATTER Sort, he uſeth ſuch Words as plainly ſhew, that a Reſurrection of the Body is no improper Expreſſion, for he ſays, that "a natural Body is ſown, a ſpiritual Body is raiſed."

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When the Scripture describes the Places from whence the Dead shall rise, it plainly intimates that the same Bodies which died will revive again. Thus we read, that "they who sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to everlasting Death."

The Metaphor of sleeping & awaking, by which

the Grave deliver up any but those that were laid in

y clear and current, if we make a small Alteration in the Version, here our Translators have not attained the true Sense, "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be cloathed upon with our House, which is from Heaven;" εἰγε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, ου γυμνοι εὑρεθησομεθα, "if so be we shall be found cloathed, and not naked." We are desirous to be cloathed upon with our House from Heaven; (i.e) with our immortal and spiritual Bodies, if so be, it shall so happen, that at the coming of Christ we shall be found in these Bodies, and not stripped of them before by Death: and then it follows; "for we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burthened;" (i.e) with the Afflictions and Pressures of this Life; "not for that we would be uncloathed;" (i.e) not that we desire, by Death, to be divested of these Bodies; "but cloathed upon;" (i.e) if God see it good, we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting-off these Bodies, have Immortality, as it were, superinduced, "that so Mortality may be swallowed up of Life."

Thus we find, that what they who had the Earnest of the Spirit, & the First-Fruits of the Spirit, groaned after, was a Deliverance of their Body from Mortality, and not a Deliverance of themselves from the Body; for, if God thought fit, they desired rather to continue in it, till, being transformed into the Likeness of Christ, it should become immortal.

Day, be ſo changed as to put on Incorruption; and having diſtinguiſhed between a natural Body, and a Body which has only an animal Life, and a Spiritual Body, or a Body which has ſpiritual Life, he declares that our Bodies, in their preſent Condition, are of the FORMER Sort: &, as to their Condition after the Reſurrection, when they ſhall be of the LATTER Sort, he uſeth ſuch Words as plainly ſhew, that a Reſurrection of the Body is no improper Expreſſion, for he ſays, that "a natural Body is ſown, a ſpiritual Body is raiſed."

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When we read, that at the Reſurrection, "All that are in the Graves, &c. (under)

are in the Graves ſhall hear the Voice of the Son of Man, and ſhall come forth," and that "the Sea will give up the Dead which were in it;" How is it poſſible to underſtand This of any thing, but of the ſame Bodies which died? For, if the ſame Fleſh ſhall not be raiſed again, what Occaſion was there to ranſack the Graves at the Laſt Day? The Sea can give up no other Bodies than what it received; nor the Grave deliver up any but thoſe that were laid in it.

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it. And was it not neceſſary, that we ſhould riſe with the very ſame Bodies, the Graves need not be opened, but we might reſt there forever. Indeed,

If a new Body were aſſumed, &c. (under)

were aſſumed, how could it be a Reſurrection? which

By conſulting 2 Cor. v. 2, 3, 4. we may be further informed what it was they groaned for, to whom, as we read at ver. 5. "God had given the Earneſt of the Spirit." — The Senſe of this Paſſage will be very clear and current, if we make a ſmall Alteration in the Verſion, where our Tranſlators have not attained the true Senſe, "In this we groan, earneſtly deſiring to be cloathed upon with our Houſe, which is from Heaven;" εἴγε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα, "if ſo be we ſhall be found cloathed, and not naked." We are deſirous to be cloathed upon with our Houſe from Heaven; (i.e) with our immortal and ſpiritual Bodies, if ſo be, it ſhall ſo happen, that at the coming of Chriſt we ſhall be found in theſe Bodies, and not ſtripped of them before by Death: and then it follows; "for we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burthened;" (i.e) with the Afflictions and Preſſures of this Life; "not for that we would be uncloathed;" (i.e) not that we deſire, by Death, to be diveſted of theſe Bodies; "but cloathed upon;" (i.e) if God ſee it good, we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting-off theſe Bodies, have Immortality, as it were, ſuperinduced, "that ſo Mortality may be ſwallowed up of Life."

Thus we find, that what they who had the Earneſt of the Spirit, or the Firſt-Fruits of the Spirit, groaned after, was a Deliverance of their Body from Mortality, and not a Deliverance of themſelves from the Body; for, if God thought fit, they deſired rather to continue in Life till, being transformed into the Likneſs of Chriſt, it ſhould become immortal.

Which implies the riſing-again of That Body, which after the Separation of the Soul, was buried in the Grave; for otherwiſe, (as it is uſually argued,) One Body would be puniſhed for the Sins committed in Another: which would be unjuſt. And, "ſhall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?" As the Body was Partner with the Soul in all her Actions, whether good or evil, ſo it is fit it ſhould hereafter ſhare with her in Rewards and Puniſhments; it being but juſt that the ſame Body which ſinned ſhould be puniſhed; and that the very ſame Flesh which pleaſed God, [illegible] Notions of modern Philoſophy againſt the general Senſe of Mankind, and the Philoſophy of all former Ages. However,

The Body being unable to determine itſelf in its Senſations, if it have any of its own, - This we think, is an unfit Argument to be inſiſted on, in as much as no Actions can be capable of Rewards or Puniſhments, but ſuch as proceed from Choice. But,

It muſt be acknowledged that the Soul may be capable of more Happineſs or Miſery, when re-united to the Body, than in its ſeparate State. For,

Beſides the Anguiſh, or Peace and Joy of Mind beſides its own Reflections, and its proper Operations, which the Soul is capable of in a State of Separation

(*) The Soul and Body being Partners in Sin, deſerve equal Puniſhment; for if it were not for the Soul, the Body could never lay Plans of Wickedneſs; and if it were not for the Body, they could never be carried into Execution.

ration from the Body; it is capable of being affected with Sensations, which arise from its Union with the Body. And,

That these may be answerable to what a Man's Actions in this Life have been, the Soul must be united to the self-same Body, so disposed & qualified as to affect the Soul as it was in this Life, only with infinitely greater, more exquisite and lasting Degrees of Pain, or of Joy and Satisfaction; yet without any Mixture of gross and sensual Pleasures in the Righteous, but only such as are suitable to refined and spiritual Bodies: which Disposition of Body depends upon the virtuous Actions & Habits of Men here; For, a Body, by vicious Practices & Customs, prone to furious Passions, insatiable Appetites, and tormenting Desires, (without any thing to gratify or assuage them,) must have quite another Effect upon a Soul, than a Body subdued to the mild, and calm, and obedient Temper of Religion and Virtue. And,

The God could by his Almighty Power form another Body to that Frame and Disposition, which the Body of any particular Man was in, when his Soul departed out of it; yet it doth not seem agreeable to the divine Goodness, and Purity, and Justice, by his immediate Power, to frame a new Body to the depraved Temper and Inclinations of a vicious Man. — Besides,

Which implies the riſing again of That Body, which God, ſhould at the Laſt Day be exalted to Glory, and receive a juſt Recompence of Reward for whatever Hardſhips and Trouble it underwent here. (*)

If it be ſaid, &c. (under)

If it be ſaid, that the Body is only the Inſtrument of Senſation to the Soul, but is itſelf capable of none, and therefore, muſt be uncapable of Rewards and Puniſhments. It may perhaps be anſwered that this is more than can abſolutely be concluded from the Notions of modern Philoſophy againſt the general Senſe of Mankind, and the Philoſophy of all former Ages. However,

The Body being unable to determine itſelf in its Senſations, if it have any of its own, - This we think, is an unfit Argument to be inſiſted on, in as much as no Actions can be capable of Rewards or Puniſhments, but ſuch as proceed from Choice. But,

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(*) The Soul and Body being Partners in Sin, deſerve equal Puniſhment; but if it were not for the Soul, the Body could never be Vaſe of Wickedneſs; and if it were not for the Body, they could never be carried into Execution.

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That theſe may be anſwerable to what a Man's Actions in this Life have been, the Soul muſt be united to the ſelf-ſame Body, ſo diſpoſed & qualified as to affect the Soul as it was in this Life, only with infinitely greater, more exquiſite and laſting Degrees of Pain, or of Joy and Satisfaction; yet without any Mixture of groſs and ſenſual Pleaſures in the Righteous, but only ſuch as are ſuitable to refined and ſpiritual Bodies: which Diſpoſition of Body depends upon the virtuous Actions & Habits of Men here; For, a Body, by vicious Practices & Cuſtoms, prone to furious Paſſions, inſatiable Appetites, and tormenting Deſires, (without any thing to gratify or aſſuage them,) muſt have quite another Effect upon a Soul, than a Body ſubdued to the mild, and calm, and obedient Temper of Religion and Virtue. And,

The God could by his Almighty Power form another Body to that Frame and Diſpoſition, which the Body of any particular Man was in, when his Soul departed out of it; yet it doth not ſeem agreeable to the divine Goodneſs, and Purity, and Juſtice, by his immediate Power, to frame a NEW Body to the depraved Temper and Inclinations of a vicious Man. — Beſides,

The Soul ſeems to have a natural Aptitude and Tendency implanted in it to a Union with its own Body: From whence elſe proceeds that great Reluctancy to a Separation from it? Indeed,

We are ſo little acquainted with the Union of the Soul and Body, that, for ought we know, a Soul can be united only to its own proper Body. Not to add,

That our Belief of enjoying Happineſs, or Suffering Miſery, in both Parts of our Frame hereafter, muſt naturally incline us to preſerve the Purity of Both here; "abſtaining, or cleanſing ourſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God." In a Word, This great Event, when it comes to paſs, will exhibit to the Univerſe an aſtoniſhing Evidence of the Power and Truth of God, who may eaſily have Reaſons for reſtoring our Bodies, which we apprehend not, beſides thoſe which, in ſome Meaſure, we do apprehend.

Upon the Whole, — If any one maintains that there may be a Reſurrection of the Dead, without a Reſurrection of the Body, we have no Occaſion to enter into this Debate with him: the proper Anſwer is, that, unleſs the Reſurrection of the Dead, which he believes, is ſuch a one as may be called a Reſurrection of the Body, his Faith muſt be different

from

from that which was expreſſed in the publick Creeds of the primitive Church, and is taught in the Goſpel. — The Truth is,

We know nothing of theſe Matters, but from the Scriptures; all beſides is only Conjecture. But the Doctrine of the Scriptures, here, (as in all other Caſes,) is agreeable to Reaſon, tho' at all Times to over-rule it, eſpecially in things that are obſcure and but little underſtood by us.

God has declared that he will raiſe theſe Bodies to Life again at the Laſt Day, the Day of Judgment, and whatever we may think of it, to Him all things are alike eaſy; - He can with as much Eaſe do it, as ſay it.

Numerous and pregnant are the Conſiderations, which might be added to theſe, in Proof of the Neceſſity, and conſequently the ſtrong Probability of a corporeal Reſurrection; but I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving only, that ſuch a thing is not leſs clearly argued by the Nature and Ends of our Redemption, than by thoſe of Creation. For,

"If the Dead riſe not," then is the Chriſtian "of all Men moſt miſerable;" & conſequently the Ends of his Redemption, which were Glory & Happineſs, are abſolutely and entirely fruſtrated. So has Providence wrought the nobleſt and moſt incomprehen-

ſible Scheme to no Purpoſe; the Holy Lamb of God was ſlain in Vain, and the Triumph over Death and the Grave, was an empty Boaſt, ſince not a Tittle of the Power of either of them is deſtroyed, or diminiſhed, but all thoſe unhappy Men, "who are fallen aſleep in Chriſt," with the flattering & deluſive Hopes of a Reſurrection, are betrayed and periſhed; condemned to a perpetual Oblivion and Obſcurity, notwithſtanding all that hath been done to redeem them from it.

If there be any Weight or Truth in theſe Conſiderations, we muſt certainly ceaſe to imagine a corporeal Reſurrection to be either improbable or unneceſſary.(*)

(*) See Note (I) page 106, &c.

Sermon

SERMON LXXXII.

On the same Subject.

1 Cor. xv. 52.

"The Dead shall be raised incorruptible."

Having already evinced the Credibility of a future Resurrection of the Body, from REASON, we proceed now to the SCRIPTURES, which are very particular and express in the Matter.

The Prospect beyond the Grave, and what became of this thoughtful busy Creature, when he was removed from the Scene of this World, has been a Speculation that has amused the Vulgar, and puzzled the Philosophy of the wise, in all Ages.

Human Nature could not sustain the Reflection of having the Prospect closed with this Life, and all its Schemes and Expectations to determine with this frail and perishable Composition of Flesh and Blood; and therefore the Vulgar supported themselves with Fables, and the Philosophers with some rational Probability of a future State. But their most superstitious Researches upon this Subject could never rise higher in it than to a fair Possibility; and the Conclusions they came to were such as they rather wished might be true, than such as they could give a firm and confident Assent to; and left the Mind in the same Room for Disputation, and even the best Men but a diffident Expectation of their Immortality.

But for the Resurrection of the Body, this was such a Contradiction to their Philosophy, that no Article of Christianity was more ridiculed. Re-

sible Scheme to no Purpose; the Holy Lamb of G was slain in Vain, and the Triumph over Death the Grave, was an empty Boast, since not a Tittle the Power of either of them is destroyed, or dim nished, but all those unhappy Men, "who are fa len asleep in Christ," with the flattering & delusi Hopes of a Resurrection, are betrayed and perishe condemned to a perpetual Oblivion and Obscurity notwithstanding all that hath been done to redeem them from it.

If there be any Weight or Truth in these Consi-derations, we must certainly cease to imagine a cor-poreal Resurrection to be either improbable or un-necessary. (*)

(*) See Note (1) page 405, &c.

Sermon

only credible & reasonable to believe that God CAN, but we may likewise absolutely assure ourselves that He WILL raise the Dead. The Revelation of his Will in his holy Word, ought to put this beyond Dispute among Christians. God hath promised it, and hath in several Instances exemplified it by his Power.

The Sadducees erred through "Ignorance of the Scriptures," as well as from "not understanding the Power of God." And,

Because this was actually charged upon the Sadducees, at a Time when the whole of Scripture was contained in the FIRST Testament, let us first enquire what

what Evidence they might have been furniſhed with from thence, ſufficient to have prevented their Miſtake.

We muſt not here indeed, expect to find ſo full and clear a Diſcovery of the thing, as hath been ſince indulged to us in the holy Goſpel, for which the compleat Diſcovery of "Life and Immortality" was reſerved: - there are many Particulars, relating to the Reſurrection, which certainly were, and were intended to be concealed from Mankind, till the Evangelical Diſpenſation ſhould take place. But yet, they had ſo clear Evidence of another Life, and conſequently of a Reſurrection in general, that had they, after a due Attention to it, continued yet incredulous, it might be juſtly ſuppoſed that they would have proved inflexible, even by the Evidence of a Perſon actually reſtored from the Dead. (1)

It cannot, with any Degree of Probability, be ſuppoſed that the Doctrine of a Reſurrection took its Riſe from any Imagination or Conception of Man. It is a thing contrary to all Senſe and Experience. Death has reigned over all Men from the Beginning of the World, and will reign, as long as the World ſhall endure. And of all that are gone down to the Grave, no one ever was known to return, nor was it ever

(1) See Luke xvi. 31.

ever surmized that any will return, from any possible Effort of Nature. Nature indeed has furnished us with Hopes, and Reason with a Persuasion, "that the Spirit will return unto God who gave it." But of the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, Nature has no Support, & Reason is bewildered in the Contemplation of it. We must therefore necessarily conclude, that the Resurrection of the Body, which Nothing in Nature could lead Men to the Discovery of, and therefore could make no Principle of Natural Religion, must have been revealed by God himself. And if it is a certain Truth, (as it will appear to be,) that as far back as we can trace any Notices of the Belief of a future State, we shall find the Belief of a Resurrection united with it, it may reasonably be supposed, that this Mode of future Existence was first revealed to Adam, and preserved as a Tradition received from their first Parent by the Patriarchs & the chosen People of God. Nor did it rest upon Tradition only; Assurance of it having been renewed at distant Times, to several eminent and holy Men, before the Institution of the Jewish Common-Wealth, and during the Continuance of it. — Let us, then, proceed to inquire what Light the Scriptures of the Old Testament, (for to these we must have Recourse,) have thrown upon this Subject. Serm. LXXXII. And,

And, in this Inquiry we muſt be allowed in ſome Caſes to follow our Saviour's Manner of Reaſoning, by arguing from Inference rather than from expreſs & poſitive Declarations. And this Conceſſion muſt be particularly claimed in the Diſcovery of the Notices, ſuppoſed to be given to our firſt Parent, of a Reſurrection. — And here,

The Support of this Suppoſition will reſt upon what is recorded in the 3d. Chapter of Geneſis, where we have the Sentence paſſed upon Adam, & the Alleviation of it, immediately after his Fall.

When God made known to Adam the Puniſhment of his Diſobedience, he tells him, "that he was taken out of the Ground - that Duſt he was, and that he ſhould return to Duſt." Here the Diſſolution & Deſtruction of the Body are denounced in the very Words of the Sentence. But there is likewiſe an Alleviation of the Sentence, and a Conſolation to be derived from it, which muſt, therefore, neceſſarily have a Reſpect to the Sentence itſelf.

The Serpent, the great Seducer, had beguiled Man; but he is told, that he would have no Reaſon to triumph in the Succeſs of his Guile; for he would find an Enemy in the Seed of the Woman, "whoſe Heel he would bruiſe, but who ſhould

bruiſe

bruiſe his Head:" (i.e) deſtroy his Power, & conſequently take away the Curſe, under which he had brought Mankind: for, as a Part of that Curſe conſiſts in the Death of the Body, it cannot be completely taken away but by the Reſurrection of the Body.

Whether Adam underſtood the full Import of theſe remarkable Words, - by whom, and by what wonderful Means the Wound of Man would be healed, and the Serpent's Treachery avenged, we have no Authority from Scripture to determine. But if they were intended to afford any Conſolation to him in his wretched Condition, (and leſs than this cannot be ſuppoſed,) what is it that he could collect from them? He was ſentenced to get his Bread by Labour, and to eat it with Sorrow, and to lie down in the Duſt at the End of a miſerable Life. What Cure was there for Death? or what Comfort could he find in any other Reflection, than in having the Hopes of Life being reſtored to him? And what Notion could he have of the Reſtoration of Life, but its being the Reſtoration of the living Man, by the Re-union of the Soul and Body, in the ſame Manner as his Nature was firſt conſtituted? And it muſt not eſcape our Obſervation, that when God made known to Adam, that Death was the Puniſh-

ment of his Diſobedience, he puts him in Mind o
his Origin, and tells him that "he was taken out o
the Ground;" - that "Duſt he was, and that h
ſhould return to Duſt."

This Explanation of his Exiſtence might after-
wards lead him naturally to reflect, that it evidently
carried in it the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance, that the ſam
Divine Power, which at firſt animated the lifeleſ
Duſt, could moſt certainly re-animate it in the ſam
Manner.

From theſe Conſiderations, it may, (we think,)
reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that if Adam had any
Aſſurances given him of a Reſtoration to Life, which
was the only Conſolation he could receive under
the Sentence of Death, they were imparted to him
under the Notion and Expectation of the Reſurrec-
tion of the Body, and the Re-union of the Body and
Soul.

If our firſt Parent was poſſeſſed of the Knowledge
of this important Truth, upon which his own Hopes
and thoſe of all his Poſterity muſt depend, we can-
not ſuppoſe, that he would ſuffer it to die with him,
but that he would carefully make it known to his
Children, and tranſmit it to his Deſcendants as the
moſt precious and valuable Diſcovery, which alone

could

could make them Amends for the Misery and Deſtruction he had entailed upon them. But whatever Care might have been taken to communicate this Doctrine, we ſoon find that it was not duly attended to, nor long remembered; For we read, that when Men began to multiply upon the Earth, Impiety and Irreligion kept-pace with the Increaſe of Mankind, ſo as to corrupt the Sons of God - even thoſe who had receiv'd this original Principle of a religious Faith. There were ſome however of the Race of Seth who preſerved their Faith and Integrity. And among theſe there is One in particular, who ſeems to have been a Sign given to this ſenſual and unbelieving Generation, for the very Purpoſe of recalling to their Minds the Senſe of a future State, under the Form in which it had been revealed to our firſt Parent. Enoch was tranſlated without paſſing through the Gates of Death, in Teſtimony of the Efficacy of that Faith by which he walked with God. And this Tranſlation was an unexceptionable Evidence to the Unbelievers of thoſe Days, that there is a Reward in another State for the Righteous. And not only ſo, but it was, at the ſame Time, a direct Proof and a Memorial, that the Bodies as well as the Souls of Men are capable of being admitted into the Manſions of the Bleſſed; and that it was the Purpoſe of

the Almighty, that the entire Man, both in Body and Soul, ſhould be received into thoſe everlaſting Habitations. (1) But,

Convincing and alarming as this wonderful Event was, ſuch is the unhappy State of things, that when Infidelity and Vice give Strength to each other, divine Revelations of every kind are diſregarded. Even the Judgments of God, how dreadful ſoever they may be, will not make any laſting Impreſſion upon the Hearts of Men. For in a few Ages after the Deluge, there were but a ſmall Number that were found faithful among the Deſcendants of Noah. The moſt illuſtrious of theſe was Abraham. And, God was pleaſed to confirm his Faith, by giving him a more diſtinct view of the Reſurrection to Life, than had been given perhaps to any of his Progenitors.

God had revealed to Abraham, that "in his Seed, all the Nations and Families of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed;" and that the Perſon, through whom this Bleſſing would be conveyed from him, was his Son, Iſaac. Yet he is commanded to ſacrifice this very Son

(1) The Reaſon why Enoch was tranſlated alive, and not raiſed from the Dead, (which may ſeem to be a Proof more directly in Point of the thing ſuppoſed to be intended,) is obvious: as the great Redeemer was to be the Author, ſo he muſt of Neceſſity have been the *Firſt-Fruits* of the Reſurrection to a Life immortal.

Son of his Affections and Hopes, while he was a Youth, and before he had any Offspring; and he readily obeys the Command. And a very rational Act of Obedience it was in One who had frequent Intercourſes by Viſions, Appearances, and Revelations, with the Almighty God; and who had received this very Son by an extraordinary Inſtance of the Divine Favour, contrary to his own Expectations and Belief, & to the uſual Courſe of Nature. He had therefore Grounds ſufficient to aſſure him, that the Command was from God, and to induce him to believe, that if God intended to convey the Bleſſing to Mankind through the Loins of Iſaac, he would moſt undoubtedly, for this Purpoſe, raiſe him up from the Dead.

He could not have been induced to This by any other Reaſoning. God had promiſed him, that by his Son Iſaac, he ſhould have a numerous Poſterity, and this Promiſe he firmly believed. Now,

He muſt know it could never be fulfilled, if Iſaac was to be ſacrificed, but by his riſing again; therefore he muſt be perſuaded that he would riſe again for that Purpoſe. "He reaſoned that God was able to raiſe him from the Dead."

This was the Faith of Abraham, which removed all Difficulties & Doubts in obeying the Command of the Lord of Life and Death. But there was ſome-

thing more in this Matter. In the Trial of Abraham's Faith, there was, moreover, a ſtrong Confirmation of it. The Epiſtle to the Hebrews (xi. 19.) informs us, that he received his Son raiſed from the Dead to Life again, in a Figure or a Similitude of Facts. And there is in this Caſe ſuch an exact and minute Correſpondence, in many very remarkable Particulars, betwixt the Facts, betwixt the Tranſaction relating to Iſaac, and what happened to our Saviour, that the former has generally been underſtood by the Chriſtian Church, in all Ages, to have been a typical Repreſentation of the Sacrifice and Reſurrection of Chriſt. The only Queſtion is, whether Abraham apprehended it to be ſuch? The Words ſpoken by God upon another Occaſion may not improperly be applied to this: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, ſeeing that all the Nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed in him?" And that it was not hid from him, we have the plain Declaration of our Saviour himſelf, when he ſays, "Abraham rejoiced to ſee my Day, and he ſaw it, and was glad." The Day of Chriſt, or the Day of the Lord, in other Places of the New Teſtament, always ſignifies the Day of the general Reſurrection; but here it denotes that important Day, whereon he gained himſelf the Victory over Sin and Death, and triumphed

triumphed openly over him that had the Power of Death, even the old Serpent, by his own Reſurrection. For what other Circumſtance can we ſuppoſe Abraham to have ſeen in Chriſt's Appearance upon Earth, beſide his Reſurrection, that could have filled him, (as the original Words import,) with an Exultation and Tumult of Joy from the Expectation of ſeeing it, and with a more temperate Joy, corrected, (as we may well ſuppoſe,) by the preceding Proſpect of Chriſt's Humiliation, when he ſaw it? "He rejoiced to ſee my Day, he ſaw it, & was glad."

Here then we learn, from the obvious Senſe of our Saviour's Words, that when Abraham received his Son raiſed from the Dead to Life again, in the ſame typical Senſe in which he offered him up, the whole Tranſaction was exhibited to him as an Explanation of the Bleſſing which was to give Life to the whole World.

In Exodus we have a remarkable Paſſage. "As touching the Reſurrection of the Dead, have you not read, (ſaith our Saviour,") that which was ſpoken to you by God, ſaying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living."

The great Regard, which not only the Sadducees, but all the Jews had to the Authority of Moſes

made it very proper for our Saviour to bring hi
Proof of the Reſurrection out of his Writin_s, a
That which was the moſt likely to convince them.

For, the peculiar Notion which the Jews had con-
cerning the Uſe of this Phraſe or Expreſſion of God's
being "any One's God," was, that he is no where in
Scripture ſaid to be any One's God, whilſt ALIVE. (1)

But, Without warranting this Obſervation to be
good, (2) It is ſufficient to the preſent Purpoſe, that
this was a Notion anciently current among the Jews.
And therefore our Saviour's Argument from this Ex-
preſſion is ſo much the ſtronger againſt them: for if
the Souls of Men be extinguiſhed by Death, (as the
Sadducees believ'd,) what did it ſignify to Abraham,
Iſaac and Jacob to have GOD call'd THEIR GOD after
they were dead? but ſurely, for GOD to be any One's
GOD, doth ſignify ſome great Benefit and Advan-
tage; which yet, (according to the Notion which the
Jews had of this Phraſe,) could not reſpect this Life,
becauſe, according to them, GOD is not ſaid to be any
One's

(1) The Jews tell us that while Iſaac lived, God is not called the
God of Iſaac, but the Fear of Iſaac. See Gen. xxxi. 42. and at Verſe
the 53. when Laban made a Covenant with Jacob, it is ſaid that "La-
ban did ſwear by the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, and the
God of their Fathers; but Jacob ſwore by the Fear of his Father Iſaac."

(2) It certainly is not, for God expreſly calls himſelf the God of
Iſaac, while Iſaac was yet alive. See Gen. xxviii. 13.

One's God till after he is dead; but it is ſaid of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob after their Death, and therefore our Saviour infers very ſtrongly againſt them, that Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob were not extinguiſhed by Death, but do ſtill live ſomewhere; for "God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living." And then he adds, (by the Way of further Explication,) "for all live to him." (i.e) tho thoſe good Men, who are departed this Life, do not ſtill live to us, here in this World; yet "they live to God," and are with him.

If this Argument, (founded on the peculiar Notion of the Jews concerning this Phraſe,) ſhould not be thought ſufficiently concluſive, we add, that, as under the Name of God was underſtood, (as we have obſerved,) a great Benefactor; and to be their God, was to bleſs them, and reward them in an extraordinary Manner, which Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob not receiving as they expected; (1) and God, after their Death, ſtill deſiring to be called their God, does hereby plainly acknowledge that he had a Bleſſing and a Reward for them ſtill, and conſequently, that he would raiſe them up to another Life, in which they might receive it. Whither

(1) It does not appear, that they were diſtinguiſhed by worldly bleſſings in ſuch a Manner, as to give a Reaſon to think them, in this

Whither we admit One, or Both of theſe Interpretations, it is certain that the Argument, in itſelf, not only aſtoniſhed the Multitude, and ſilenced the Sadducees, who after that, "durſt not aſk him any more Queſtions;" but even commanded the Applauſe of thoſe, who, at other Times, were his moſt profeſſed Enemies. By which it is evident that the Reſurrection of the Dead was revealed under the Law; that the Phariſees collected it thence; & that the Sadducees, who denied it, "erred; not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God."

Another Inſtance, in Proof of a Reſurrection, (ſimilar to the fore-going in ſome Reſpects,) from the Old-Teſtament, is, from the different Acceptation of the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain, before God, and the Conſequences of them.

"Abel offered to God a more acceptable Sacrifice than

Reſpect, the peculiar Favourites of Heaven. They had in this World as great a Share of Trouble and Afflictions as other Men. — One of them in particular declared, in his Old Age, "Few and evil," or unhappy, "have the Days of my Life been."

The Happineſs, therefore, which theſe righteous Men found not upon Earth, muſt have been reſerved for them in a better Country, (i.e) heavenly. Immortality muſt have been the Object of their Views and the intended Reward of their Faith: "for God is not the God of the Dead;" who have a ſhort, temporal, painful Exiſtence; "but of the Living," who ſhall exiſt in Happineſs forever.

than Cain, and he had this Teſtimony, that he pleaſed God;" which was in Effect to declare, that God was the God of Abel, and not of Cain; ſo that by Virtue of the general Importance of this Promiſe, it might juſtly be expected that Abel's Condition ſhould have been much better than Cain's: but if there be no Happineſs after this Life, Abel's was evidently much worſe. For, upon this very Account, that he pleaſed God better, he was killed by Cain, who had offered to God a ſlight and contemptuous Offering. And Cain lived a long Time after, & grew great, and built Cities. Now,

Suppoſing there was no Life after this, This muſt have been a moſt diſcouraging Example to all Ages, from the Beginning of the World to the End of it; and have made Men forever afraid to pleaſe God upon ſuch hard Terms; when they were ſure of no other Reward for ſo doing, but to be oppreſſed and ſlain by the Hands of the Wicked.

So that if this were really the Caſe, it would puzzle all the Wit and Reaſon of Mankind to vindicate the Equity and Juſtice of the divine Providence, & to reſcue it from this formidable Objection.

In proceeding ſomewhat further in the ſacred Hiſtory, we find Job expreſſing himſelf on this Head, (if we at all underſtand his Words,) in very ſtrong Terms.

If we ſhould ſuppoſe Job to have been called upon to have declared his Belief in a Reſurrection, (which ſeems to have been the Caſe,) he could not poſſibly have made uſe of clearer or ſtronger Terms. They are, indeed, ſo very clear and ſtrong, that this, (it is apprehended,) has been a principal Reaſon why ſome learned Men have forced them into another Senſe, (1) from an Imagination, that the very beſt Men of thoſe

(1) The Jews interpret theſe Words of Job, as relating to the Happineſs only of the next Life, without any Reference to the Reſurrection, becauſe they will not here diſcern the promiſed Redeemer: Though this Doctrine of the Reſurrection was agreeable to an ancient Tradition that was current among them, as appears from all the Writings, and particularly from the Tranſlation of the laſt Verſe of the very Book of Job itſelf, which, according to the LXX, runs thus: "So Job died, being old and full of Days! but it is written that he "ſhall riſe again with thoſe whom the Lord raiſes up."

Some modern Commentators underſtand them of Job's Expectation to be reſtored to his former temporal Felicity; but he expreſſes himſelf with too much Aſſurance and Certainty for a Matter of that Nature, and from which he was ſo far from having any Expectation, that, towards the latter End of the Book, he ſeems to deſpair concerning it.

The Words being, therefore, introduced with ſuch a remarkable Preface, (ver. 23, 24.) & being ſuch a pertinent Anſwer to the Objections of his Friends, who accuſed him as a Sinner; upon which Account he pleads a Redeemer, whom he deſcribes as "ſtanding on the Earth," as the Judge of Quick & Dead at the laſt Day; it is moſt reaſonable to apply them to the Reſurrection. In which Senſe Clemens Romanus, (cotemporary with the Apoſtles,) underſtood them, as did many of the Fathers after him; and, by Conformity to primitive Antiquity, they are ſo uſed by our Church in the Burial-Office.

those Times could not have had so perfect and adequate a Conception, as we there find, of that Life and Immortality which was to be brought to Light by the Gospel. This Matter will be considered in its proper Place. In the mean Time, let it be observed, that if Job meant only to declare his Persuasion of the Recovery of his Health and Happiness in this Life, why does he so often renounce this Hope in the most pathetic Strains of Despair? Why does he cry out, "Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Misery, and Life to the bitter in Soul? which long for Death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid Treasures?" Why does he say, "Mine Eye shall no more see good; the Eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more; thine Eyes are upon me, and I am not." These, and many more of the same Kind, are evidently the Lamentations of a Man, who had no Prospect of finding any Relief from his Miseries on this Side the Grave. And for this Despondency and Repining, he is charged by Eliphaz, (chap. xv.) with Want of religious Faith; "having cast off the Fear of God; for he believeth not, (saith he,) that he shall return out of Darkness." On the same Account he is charged by Bildad, (chap. viii,) "with knowing not God."

These Accusations brought from him, in his Re-

ply, (chap. xix.) a Confeſſion of his Faith, which he introduces with a ſolemn Prayer, that it might be engraved in the Rock, and continue for an everlaſting Memorial to all Generations. The Senſe of this remarkable Confeſſion I ſhall give in a ſhort and ſtrict Paraphraſe of the Text, from the Authority of very able and judicious Critics. "I know for Certainty that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall at laſt, or in the laſt Day, ariſe with Power over the Duſt, that Duſt out of which Man was made. Then ſhall this dilacerated Body put on a new Cloathing. *Veachar yori nikkepah zôth. Alia erit Cutis mea hæc Laceratio.* So the Words are read & tranſlated by Michaelis. "And from my own Body ſhall I ſee God; whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf; with mine own Eyes ſhall I behold him; nor ſhall I then be a Man different from myſelf." This was the Root of the Matter found in him - the Foundation and Support of Job's Integrity. And here we have the Reſurrection of the one identical Body, ſo as to conſtitute the ſame individual Perſon, aſſerted in as clear and ſtrong a Manner as Language is capable of doing it. — Again,

When Elijah was taken up ALIVE into Heaven, this muſt ſurely give an Expectation, that the Body, as well as the Soul, was to partake of future Happineſs. — And farther,

When

When the ſeveral Perſons, mentioned in the Old Teſtament, were raiſed up to Life in this World, it could not but raiſe the Probability, (not to ſay the Certainty,) of a general Reſurrection in the next. (1)

We muſt not expect, to find any thing relating to this Subject in thoſe hiſtorical Books of the Old Teſtament, which give an Account of the civil Affairs of the Jews, and the Inſtitution and Settlement of their Common-Wealth. Only we muſt obſerve, that their whole Economy, and the great Events which happened to them, eſpecially their Deliverance from Egyptian Bondage, and their Settlement in the Land of Canaan, were Types and Figures of better things to come; their ultimate Views being thereby directed to that great Deliverance and that heavenly Canaan, which had been the Object of the Faith of all holy Men from the Beginning of the World. Under

(1) There are Three Examples, in Fact, in the Old Teſtament, which are proper to confirm our Faith in this Particular.

God heard the Voice of Elijah for the dead Child of the Widow of Sarepta, "and the Soul of the Child came into him again, and he revived." 1 Kings xvii. 22. — As Eliſha ſucceeded in the ſame Spirit, ſo in the ſame Power, for he raiſed the Child of the Shunamite from Death. 2 Kings, 4th Chapter. Nor did that Power he had, die with him; for, when they were burying a dead Man, "They caſt the Man into the Sepulchre of Eliſha, and when the Man was let down, and touch'd the Body of Eliſha, he revived, and ſtood upon his Feet." 2 Kings xiii. 21.

Under what Notion this Faith was ſtill retained in the days of David, we may learn from the 16th Pſalm, where he makes mention of the Reſurrection of the Body in very expreſs Terms. "Thou ſhalt not leave my Soul in Hell," (i.e) my Life in the Grave, "neither ſhalt thou ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee Corruption." The latter Part of the Words confines this Text to the Perſon of Chriſt, who ſaw no Corruption, which David himſelf did. But he who had a prophetical View of Chriſt's Reſurrection cannot be ſuppoſed not to have known the Deſign and Effects of it, but muſt have looked upon it as the Pledge and Aſſurance of his own. The Belief of it is likewiſe very clearly expreſſed in the 49th Pſalm, which is uſhered in by a ſolemn Call for the Attention of all Mankind, as being the Concern of all. The Pſalmiſt firſt obſerves, that irreligious Men, however great and powerful, had no Power to redeem a Brother from the Grave, "that he ſhould live for ever and not ſee Corruption."

They could not pay the Price of this Redemption. He then tells them, that, notwithſtanding their Pride and Preſumption, "they would be laid in the Grave like Sheep; Death ſhall feed upon them, and the righteous, in their Turn, ſhould have Dominion over them in the Morning of their Reſurrection; for God,

(ſaith

(ſaith he,) will redeem my Soul, or Life, from the Power of the Grave, for he ſhall receive me."

In a few Deſcents after David, the Jews in general had well nigh abandoned the Faith and Hopes of their Forefathers. Therefore God was pleaſed to give them the moſt explicit Declarations of the Reſurrection from a Prophet, who, from the clear View he had of the Meſſiah's Kingdom, and of the great Events which were to eſtabliſh and follow it, has been uſually ſtiled the Evangelical Prophet.

I ſhall only produce two Paſſages from Iſaiah, with this previous Obſervation; that the Prophecies, which have an apparent Reference to ſome particular Circumſtances of the Jewiſh State, are ſo expreſſed, as to carry our Views to ſome other more important Object, for the Sake of which that State was at firſt erected, and was all along conducted and preſerved by a particular Providence. And it is moſt evident, that in many Parts of his Prophecies, Deſcriptions are given of a future glorious State, which cannot correſpond with the State of things in this World, under any of the Diſpenſations of Providence, which have yet appeared, and which hitherto are manifeſtly incomplete, and preparatory only to that great Event which is to be the Conſummation of all things.

In the 26th Chapter of Iſaiah, Verſe 19, are theſe Words: "Thy dead Men ſhall live, together with thy dead Body ſhall they ariſe. Awake and ſing, ye that dwell in the Duſt, for thy Dew is as the Dew of Heaven, and the Earth ſhall caſt out the Dead." And again, (at the 21ſt Verſe,) "The Earth alſo ſhall diſcloſe her Blood, and ſhall no more cover her ſlain."

If we ſuppoſe theſe Texts to have a Relation to the general Reſurrection, (as the Jewiſh Interpreters apply them,) and every Word is plain & ſignificant: but if we ſuppoſe them to mean no more than the Deliverance of Jeruſalem from the Aſſyrians, or any other Deliverance of the Jews, and the Expreſſion muſt appear much to overcharge the Senſe. — But,

There is another very remarkable Paſſage in Iſaiah & well deſerves our Attention, in the laſt Chapter of his Prophecies. He had given, in the 53d Chapter, a prophetical Deſcription of the Sufferings and Death of Chriſt: and had he been to have written an hiſtorical Account of them after the Events, he could not have done it with a greater Exactneſs and Preciſion. He there mentions likewiſe his coming to Life again; "He ſhall ſee his Seed, and ſhall prolong his Days."

In ſeveral of the following Chapters, he mentions the

the Creation of new Heavens and a new Earth, and deſcribes the Felicity of them in ſuch Expreſſions as can only ſuit the future pacific State of the Meſſiah's Kingdom. After this, in the Cloſe of his Prophecies, he introduces, with a Solemnity ſuitable to their Importance, the following Words, "As an Acclamation from the City, as a Voice from the Temple, as a Voice of the Lord. Before ſhe travailed, ſhe brought forth; before her Pains came, ſhe was delivered of a Man-Child. Who hath heard ſuch a thing? Who hath ſeen ſuch things? Shall the Earth be made to bring forth in one Day; or ſhall a Nation be born at once? for as ſoon as Zion travailed, ſhe brought forth her Children. Shall I bring to the Birth, & not cauſe to bring forth ſaith the Lord? Shall I cauſe to bring forth, and ſhut the Womb, ſaith God?"

If we apply this Paſſage to any ſubſequent Deliverances of the Jews, - to their Return from the Babyloniſh Captivity, - or to their Recovery from the Deſolations of Antiochus: - or if we apply it to the great and ſudden Increaſe of the Chriſtian Church, on the firſt preaching of the Goſpel; and what Agreement can we find in either Caſe betwixt the Prophecy and the Events?

In the former Application, Who was the Man-Child that the Earth was to bring forth before her

general Delivery? - How was a Nation born at once, and in one Day, when thoſe Deliverances were the Work of Time, attended with Difficulties, Interruptions, and Delays, partial and incomplete? How is it, that ſuch a thing was never ſeen, or heard of before, when the Deliverance of this very People from their Bondage in Egypt was much more miraculous and aſtoniſhing?

In the latter Application, though we read of three thouſand being made Proſelytes to the Goſpel in one Day, yet how ſmall a Proportion did the Jewiſh Converts in general bear to the unconverted Part of their Nation? In the Gentile World, the Converſion was ſlower, and the Diſproportion greater. In either Caſe, great Force muſt be uſed to give an improper Senſe to the Words which is not in any proportionate Degrees reconcileable to Facts. But if we apply them to the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and the ſudden uninterrupted Reſurrection of the univerſal Church of God, to which this Prophecy is limited, in Conſequence of it, and every Word is pertinent, expreſſive and emphatical.

This Scene, we are told, will be diſcloſed, when the Glory of the Gentiles ſhall have flown in, and all the Jews ſhall be brought as an Offering to the Lord from all Nations; and then it is that our Sa-

viour

viour likewiſe has told us, "the End ſhall come," when, according to this Prophecy, this new-raiſed Seed, and the new Heavens, & the new Earth, ſhall appear and remain together. — And further ſtill, & what leaves no Room to doubt of the Senſe of this Paſſage, is our Lord's repeated Application of the very Words, which Iſaiah makes uſe of to expreſs the Vengeance of God upon the ungodly in the End of this Prophecy, to the final Puniſhment of them in the Day of Judgment. "Their Worm ſhall not die, neither ſhall their Fire be quenched." The other Part of the Prophecy therefore muſt, by Parity of Application, relate to the joyful Reſurrection of the Church of God. — Again,

In the Book of Daniel we have an expreſs Declaration that a Time ſhould come, when "they who ſleep in the Duſt of the Earth, ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame and everlaſting Contempt." (1) Again,

When thoſe, whom we commonly call the "THREE Children," in the former Part of this Book, tell the King, that even tho' it were not the Pleaſure of God to

(1) This Teſtimony from Daniel is conſtantly by the Jews themſelves applied to the Reſurrection; and tho Heathens and Socinians refer it wholly to the Deliverance from Antiochus; yet that can have no Affinity with the "everlaſting Life," and "everlaſting Contempt," in the latter Part of the Verſe.

to deliver them from the fiery Furnace, yet "would they not ſerve his Gods," on what other Principle could they ſo rationally, or did they ſo probably ſay this, as on that of an aſſured Reliance on the firm Promiſe of God to raiſe them up again to Life hereafter, and to reward them for their unſhaken Adherence to him?

Towards the Expiration of the legal Diſpenſation, it ſeems very plain, that holy Men among the Jews had ſtill clearer and more expreſs Apprehenſions concerning a future State than are to be met-with in the Writings of Moſes, or of any of the Prophets.

The Law given by Moſes did ſuppoſe the Immortality of the Souls of Men, and the Expectation of another Life after this, as Principles of Religion in ſome Degree naturally known; but made no new & poſitive Revelation of theſe things. Nor was there any Occaſion for it, the Law of Moſes being a political Law, not intended for the Government of Mankind, but one particular Nation; and therefore was eſtabliſhed, as political Laws are, upon temporal Promiſes and Threatnings; promiſing temporal Proſperity to the Obſervation of its Precepts, and threatning the Breach of them with temporal Judgments and Calamities.

This

This, doubtleſs, was the true Reaſon why Arguments drawn from another World are ſo obſcurely inſiſted upon under that Diſpenſation; not but that another Life after this was always ſuppoſed, and was undoubtedly the Hope & Expectation of good Men under the Law, but the clear Diſcovery of it was reſerved for the Times of the MESSIAS. And therefore as thoſe Times drew on, and the SUN of Righteouſneſs was near his riſing, the Shadows of the Night began to be chaſed away, and Men's Apprehenſions of a future State to clear up; ſo that in the Time of the Maccabees good Men ſpake with more Confidence and Aſſurance of theſe things.

It is likewiſe to be conſidered, that the temporal Calamities and Sufferings with which the Jews were almoſt continually haraſſed from the Time of their Captivity, had very much weaned good Men from the Conſideration of temporal Promiſes, and awakened their Minds to the more ſerious Thoughts of another World. It being natural to Men when they are deſtitute of preſent Comfort, to ſupport themſelves with the Expectation of better things for the future, and as the Apoſtle to the Hebrews expreſſeth it, "to fly for Refuge to lay hold upon the Hope that is before them," and to employ their Reaſon to fortify themſelves as well as they can in that Perſuaſion.

And this ſurely was the true Occaſion of thoſe clearer and riper Apprehenſions of good Men concerning a future State, in thoſe Times of Diſtreſs and Perſecution: it being very agreeable to the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the divine Providence not to leave his People deſtitute of ſufficient Support under great Trials and Sufferings; under which nothing but the Hopes of a better Life could have born up their Spirits.

Your own Reading and Obſervation will ſuggeſt to you, that I have omitted many Paſſages in the inſpired Writings of the Old Teſtament, which would have thrown Light upon the Subject before us; having only ſelected ſome of the principal Teſtimonies, at different Periods, ſufficient to confirm the Fact which we have endeavoured to eſtabliſh, that the Church of God has, in all Ages, embraced the Doctrine of a future State, under the Notion of a Reſurrection of the Body.

That the ſame Sentiments continued after theſe Times, we have the Evidence of the Apochryphal Writers. — I ſhall only extract a few Paſſages from them, which come up fully to the Point.

In the 2d. Book of Eſdras, God is introduced as giving Directions to the Jews in ſeveral Points of their religious Conduct; One of which enjoins the

pious

pious Care of their Dead. "Whereſoever thou find-eſt the Dead, take them, and bury them, and I will give thee the firſt Place in my Reſurrection," (verſe 23.) And agreeably to this, Judas is ſaid, in the ſecond Book of Maccabæus, (xii. 43.) "to have taken up the Bodies of the ſlain and buried them, in that he was mindful of the Reſurrection." Again,

We have a remarkable Inſtance in the Hiſtory of the Seven Brethren in the Maccabees; who being cruelly tortured & put to Death by Antiochus, do moſt expreſsly declare their confident Expectation of a Reſurrection to a better Life - to which Hiſtory the Apoſtle certainly alludes, when he ſays; "Others were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection." For, there is One of them, ſtretching forth his Hands to the Torment, ſaith, "Theſe I had from Heaven; and for his Laws I deſpiſe them; and from him I hope to receive them again." — Another, "It is good, being put to Death by Men, to look for Hope from God, to be raiſed up again by him." And,

Laſtly; - The Mother declares to her Children; "I neither gave you Birth, nor Life, nor was it I that formed your Members - but doubtleſs the Creator of the World, who formed the Generation of Man, and found out the Beginning of all things,

will alſo of his Mercy give you Breath & Life again, as you now regard not yourſelves for his Laws' Sake."

When our bleſſed Saviour came into the World, he found the Jews in Poſſeſſion of the ſame Opinion. None but the Sadducees, who were diſtinguiſhed more by their Rank than by their Numbers, had renounced it. And this they did in Conſequence of their Diſbelief of any future State at all. For they conceived, as the reſt of the Jews did, that the Doctrine of a future State implied the Doctrine of a Reſurrection.

That this Doctrine was received by all other Jews, we have the Teſtimony of St. Paul, in his Apology before King Agrippa. "I ſtand, (ſays he,) and am judged for the Hope of the Promiſe made of God unto our Fathers: unto which Promiſe our Twelve Tribes," (the whole Body of the Jews,) "inſtantly ſerving God Day and Night, hope to come."

What this Promiſe was, is clearly intimated in the Words immediately following: "Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible, that God ſhould raiſe the Dead?" I may farther obſerve, that this Paſſage, which mentions the Reſurrection as a Promiſe made by God unto the Fathers, is likewiſe a Support of the general Argument of this Diſcourſe: and ſhall therefore, cloſe the whole Evidence produced in this Caſe with

with St. Paul's expreſs Confirmation of it in another Place, [viz] the 11th chapter of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews. He there declares, that the Faith of all the pious and good Men, who had lived from the Beginning of the World, and which had ſupported many of them in their Integrity againſt all the Cruelties & Tortures that malicious Wickedneſs could invent, reſted upon this Principle, "that they might obtain a better Reſurrection."

Theſe are the Intimations and Proofs of a Reſurrection of the Body, as exiſting in the Old Teſtament.

But ſtill, - The full Confirmation of it was reſerved for our Saviour to give; who having, in his Life-time raiſed up ſeveral Perſons, raiſed up himſelf in the laſt Place, to afford us the ſtrongeſt Demonſtration poſſible, that he both can, and will raiſe us at the Laſt Day.

He who proved this upon the Sadducees on the Principles of the Moſaic Diſpenſation, did not let it reſt there; but, in Order to prevent the like Miſtake in any of his Diſciples and Followers, hath added ſuch clear and perfect Declarations of it, as to ſet it for the future out of all the Reach of Cavil or Diſpute. But,

Before I proceed to the ſeveral Texts, proving THIS, in the New Teſtament, it may be neceſſary to

remove an Objection, [viz] - It may be aſked, How is this Doctrine conſiſtent with the Aſſertion, "that Life and Immortality were brought to Light by the Goſpel," through the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and the Preaching of his Apoſtles, ſince we have ſo many and ſtrong Intimations given of it before?

We anſwer, that the Expreſſion of being "brought to light," according to the true Import of the original Word φωτιζω, does not mean the firſt Diſcovery of a thing, but the throwing a clearer and ſtronger Light upon it. — The Patriarchs ſaw, by Faith, what was ſhewn to them at a Diſtance, through Prophecies and Types, which were to them as Light, directing their Eyes to Heaven, though ſhining in a dark Place, till the Day-ſtar aroſe, and diffuſed a brighter and more general Light. — The true State of the Caſe is this: In all the ancient Notices given of a Reſurrection, there is likewiſe an Intimation given, that it ſhould be brought to paſs by a Perſon who ſhould appear in the World with Power, to aboliſh Death and regain his Conqueſts. The whole, indeed, of this wonderful Diſpenſation had not been revealed. That a Redemption from the Grave, and a great Salvation, was to be wrought by the Meſſiah, for the People of God, was foretold, believed, and expected. But that it had been determined in the Fore-

Fore-Knowledge and Counsels of God, even before the World began, that Atonement should be made for the Sins of the whole World, by the Sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, and Immortality restored, by the Power of his Resurrection, to all Mankind, this was a Mystery kept secret from Men and Angels, before it was revealed in the Accomplishment. The superior Knowledge, therefore, gained in this Point, by the Christian Revelation, lies in this: that we have actually seen the Confirmation of the Promises given to the Fathers by the coming of the great Redeemer himself: that, by having raised himself from the Grave, we know that he has the Power of the Resurrection, & is, as he emphatically styles himself, "the Resurrection and the Life;" and that, by his Resurrection, he has indeed, gained and proclaimed the Victory over the great Enemy of Mankind, which was foretold from the Beginning of the World, and expected by the Church of God through all the Ages of it. They looked for Immortality through a Redeemer, by Promise: We have seen the Redeemer himself, and through him have the Covenant of Immortality actually conveyed to us.

The Result of all that has been said, is this: When the Apostles preached Jesus and the Resur-

rection, they preached no NOVEL Doctrine. Theſe had been the Deſire and the Expectation of Ages. All the pious and good Men that ever lived, who retained the Religion of their firſt Parent, and looked for the Redemption, of which he had received the Promiſe, expected their Part in it by Means of a Redeemer, who, through the mighty Power of God, would raiſe their Bodies again from the Duſt, to a Life incorruptible and immortal. So that, when we profeſs to believe in the Reſurrection of the Body, we profeſs the PRIMITIVE Faith of the Church of God: and we embrace the Doctrine of a future State, under the SAME Notion, that all, who were willing to receive eternal Life as the Gift of God, ever did embrace it, [viz] that of the Re-Union of the Soul and Body after Death. And, as our Lord's Reſurrection fulfilled the Promiſes given to the preceeding Generations, ſo theſe Promiſes, recorded in the ſacred Writings, are a ſtanding Confirmation of the Evidence of thoſe Eye-Witneſſes upon which the Faith and Hopes of the ſucceeding Generations were eſtabliſhed. They cannot have a ſtronger Support than one which was nearly co-eval with the World, - has ſubſiſted through all the Ages of it, and has all the Strength that the Concurrence of human and divine Teſtimony can give to any Article of Faith.

The

The particular Texts, in the New Teſtament confirming the Doctrine of a Reſurrection are as follow.

Our Saviour, (as we have ſeen,) ſuppoſes the Reſurrection revealed under the Law, in his Diſcourſe with the Sadducees. He cautions his Diſciples to "fear him who can deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell." Now the Body, as long as it is dead, is devoid of Senſe, and ſo incapable of Torment, till it be raiſed to Life again. — He promiſes a Recompence, at the Reſurrection of the Juſt, to thoſe that relieve the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, and the Blind. He poſitively declares in St. John, that "the Hour is coming in which, all that are in the Graves ſhall hear his Voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done Good, unto the Reſurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil, to the Reſurrection of Damnation." — More than once doth he promiſe his faithful Followers that "he will raiſe them up at the Laſt Day;" and for that Reaſon he calls himſelf "the Reſurrection and the Life."

In the Revelation we are told, that "the Sea ſhall give up the Dead that are in it, and Death and the Grave deliver up the Dead which are in them, in Order to be judged, every Man according to his Works."

St. Paul diſcourſes before the Sanhedrim of the

Reſurrection of the Dead. In his Defence before Felix the Governour, he openly profeſſes his Belief of "the Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt." — He aſſures the Corinthians that "we muſt all appear before the Judgement-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in the Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad." — He tells the Philippians, that "the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall change our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body." — He deſcribes the Manner of the Reſurrection to the Theſſalonians, that "the Dead ſhall riſe firſt;" - and with the Corinthians, he argues from the Certainty of Chriſt's Reſurrection to the Neceſſity of ours.

Theſe Texts ſufficiently prove that the Reſurrection of the Dead was delivered as a neceſſary Article of Faith from the Beginning of Chriſtianity, and that it is ſtill the Expectation of the Faithful; for, "if the Dead riſe not, Chriſtians are of all Men moſt miſerable."

In Confirmation of a Doctrine, thus eſtabliſhed by Precept, we have Examples to prove it.

The THREE Inſtances under the Law are equalled by THREE under the Goſpel. — Our Saviour reſtored to Life the Ruler of the Synagogue's Daughter; He had

had Compaſſion on the Widow of NAIN, and raiſed up her Only-Son that was dead; &, after his Friend Lazarus had been dead and buried four Days, he reſtored him to Life again in the Preſence of many of the Jews, who thereupon believed on him.

But, all the Inſtances were exceeded in our Saviour's own Reſurrection, which ſo infinitely manifeſted forth his Power and Glory; beſides the many Bodies of Saints, that ſlept, which aroſe after his Reſurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many.

Conſonant to theſe Aſſurances of Scripture, with the Reaſon of the thing itſelf, hath been the Faith of the pureſt Churches in all their Creeds. But further,

The Reſurrection will be univerſal; all Mankind that have laid down their Bodies, and committed them to the Grave, will receive them again.

The Jews are charged with denying it to be GENERAL; (1) excluding from it the Wicked, and confining

(1) Falſely we think, except in ſome few Inſtances of very little Authority. For beſides that the direct Contrary is charged upon them by St. Paul as a general and received Opinion. "And have Hope, (ſaith he,) towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt."

Several of their Rabbi's expreſly taught it; and that very Paſſage, in which they are ſaid to ground this Opinion, is a direct Proof of the

fining it to the Virtuous and juſt. "The Rain, (ſay they,) deſcends alike on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt; but the Reſurrection belongs to the Juſt alone" (1) But the very End and Deſign of a Reſurrection is demonſtrative of the contrary. The juſt riſe to receive their Reward: but there is a Reward which is due to the Unjuſt alſo; and Death, as it implies merely a Separation of the Soul and Body, is not the only Wages of Sin. For, "Whoſoever ſhall not be found regiſtered in the Book of Life, ſhall be caſt into the Lake of Fire; which is the SECOND Death;" and this Death it is which is the proper "Wages of Sin." But,

Were there not one ſingle Argument to be drawn from Reaſon for it, indeed, were Reaſon even againſt it, (which it is certain ſhe is very far from being,) yet Revelation is too ſtrong, in this Point, to be ſafely rejected.

When

contrary. When we read of the "many who ſhall ſleep, &c. (Dan. xii. 2.) ſome ſhall awake to everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame," &c. we muſt think a Man beyond Reaſon, who ſhould urge this as a Proof that none ſhall "awake to Shame." — In a Word, Whatever has any Way ſerved to bring this Imputation upon them, is rather a Proof that they were generally too intent upon, (what the Author of the Revelations calls,) "the *firſt* Reſurrection," that they ſeemed ſometimes to forget the *ſecond*.

(1) Vide *Maimonid.* Explan. C. 10. Tract. Sanhedr.

When the Houſholder returned from his Travels, he did not forget the ſlothful and wicked Servant, but oblidged him alſo to ſtand up, and give an Account of the Management of his Truſt, as well as the good and faithful. — At the gathering-together of all Nations, the Goats are compelled to appear, as well as the Sheep; - and, when the "Voice of the Son of Man is heard, out of the Graves ſhall come forth" to the Reſurrection, not only "they who have done Good, but they who have done Evil"; - with this Difference indeed, that the former ſhall come forth to "the Reſurrection of Life, the latter to the Reſurrection of Damnation."

The Apoſtle teaches, that "we muſt ALL appear before the Judgement-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in the Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be GOOD or BAD." "The Lord knoweth, (ſaith St. Peter,) "how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations, and to reſerve the Unjuſt unto the Day of Judgement to be puniſhed." — And Laſtly, - "In the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgement of God, who will render to every Man according to his Deeds," Regard will be had not only "to thoſe, who by patient Continuance in well-doing, ſeek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, who ſhall receive

eternal Life; but to thoſe alſo who have been contentious, and have not obeyed the Truth, but have obeyed Unrighteouſneſs, who ſhall receive Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh, and that upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil."

I ſhall content myſelf with theſe Paſſages out of the Variety which might be produced to this Purpoſe, with which even the Stars can ſcarce vie, for Multitude; nor ſhould I indeed have thought it neceſſary to touch at all upon a Point ſo very evident, but that I am unwilling to omit any thing, which may tend to the complete Explication of the Subject before us.

I am not aware of any thing further of this Kind, except it be with Regard to the Time when this Reſurrection ſhall take-place; which we are every where told ſhall be at the End of the World, or "in the Laſt-Day." (1) But, when THAT Day ſhall be, is at preſent a Secret, lodged only in the Breaſt of the Father.

As to what ſhall happen to thoſe Bodies which ſhall be alive at Chriſt's coming, we are expreſsly informed, that they ſhall undergo the ſame Transformation, or rather Transfiguration with thoſe which ſhall have ſlept in the Graves. For tho we ſhall not

(1) See page 238. &c.

ALL sleep, yet we shall ALL be changed," and be brought before the Judgement-Seat of Christ together. (1)

With Respect to some few other Particulars, as what Place shall be the Scene of the Resurrection. What shall be the Process, — What the Sign. Whether a Trumpet shall really be sounded or not, (2) &c. Which are Matters of mere Conjecture, as there is no Necessity for our being acquainted with them, were it even possible, (which it is certain that it is not,) so certainly all Inquiries after them savour rather of Boldness and Folly, than of either Piety or Philosophy.

Upon

(1) With Respect to the Question whether those who shall be found alive at, or rather just before, the Day of Judgment, shall die suddenly, and revive again immediately in Order to make the Resurrection general, (as some have strongly asserted,) it is a Matter which does not at all concern us to enquire after: Tho' the contrary may, doubtless, be strongly presumed from that express Assertion, that "We shall not all sleep," (1 Cor. xv. 51.) and the general Doctrine, that Christ at his coming, shall judge both the Quick and the Dead. See Acts x. 42. 2 Tim. iv. 1. - 1 Thess. iv. 15. &c.

(2) It was a received Opinion of the Jews, (followed herein by some Christians,) that the Scene of the general Resurrection & Judgement, should be the Vale of Jehosaphat. See Joel. iii. 2. And Vossius supposes the Trumpet may be no other than an articulate Voice: probably crying aloud, "Arise Ye Dead, and come to Judgment."

Upon the Whole of this Argument - We are to believe as a neceſſary and infallible Truth, that as "it is appointed for all Men once to die," ſo it is alſo determined that all Men ſhould riſe from Death, that their Bodies committed to the Grave, and diſſolved into Duſt, ſhall, at the Laſt Day, be recollected, and reunited to their Souls; - that the ſame Bodies that lived before, ſhall be revived; and that this Reſurrection ſhall be univerſal; the Juſt to enjoy everlaſting Life, and the Wicked to be condemned to everlaſting Puniſhment: This being not only poſſible, but highly probable to Reaſon; and, upon Chriſtian Principles, infallibly certain.

Sermon

SERMON LXXXIII.

On the ſame Subject,

1 Cor. xv. 52.

"The Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible."

Having from ſeveral Arguments, both from Reaſon and Scripture, confirmed the great Article of the Chriſtian Faith, "the Reſurrection of the Dead;" we ſhall now, (according to the Method propoſed,) be the better able to anſwer the Objections which have been alledged againſt it: - for, being once grounded in the Faith, every Argument will have its juſt Weight with us; & any ſeeming Difficulty, (ſhould there be any,) will be of no Force againſt evident Truth, and infallible Certainty.

There are but two Objections of any Conſideration; - I ſhall repreſent them with their utmoſt Advantage.

The Firſt is againſt the Reſurrection in general, as a thing in itſelf impoſſible, after the Bodies of Men are reſolved into Duſt, to recollect all the diſperſed Parts,

Parts, and bring them together in Order again.

The Second is levelled againſt the Reſurrection in ſome particular Inſtances, and pretended to be impoſſible in ſome Caſes only, [viz] when that which was the Matter of one Man's Body, does afterwards become the Matter of another; in which Caſe, (ſay they,) it is impoſſible that BOTH theſe ſhould, at the Reſurrection, each have their own. (1)

As to the FIRST Objection, it is granted that the Heathens alledged it againſt the primitive Chriſtians, for which Reaſon they burnt the Bodies of the Martyrs, and ſcattered their Aſhes in the Air to be blown about by the Winds, in Deriſion of their Hopes of a Reſurrection: But,

The Weakneſs of this Objection appears from the falſe Foundation it is grounded upon, it wholly depending upon a Miſtake of the Nature of God, & his Providence, as if it did not extend to the ſmalleſt things, - as if God did not know all things that he made, and had them not always in his View, and perfectly under his Command: - whereas, infinite Knowledge underſtands the moſt minute things, and

(1) This hath Reference to Bodies devoured by Cannibals, who live chiefly on human Fleſh; or to Bodies eaten by Fiſhes, and turned into their Nouriſhment; which, perhaps, being afterwards eaten by other Men, are converted into the Subſtance of their Bodies.

and infinite Power can order them as he pleaſes. (1)

As to the SECOND Objection, it is more cloſe and preſſing; being not unlike that of the Sadducees to our Saviour, "whoſe Wife ſhall ſhe be at the Reſurrection?" ſo here, when ſeveral have had the ſame Body, whoſe ſhall it be at the Reſurrection? & how ſhall they be ſupplied that have it not?

I ſhall not, in Anſwer to this, take the uſual Method of clearing it, by alledging the continual FLUX and REFLUX of the Body; and that conſequently, if the very Matter of the Body, which a Man had at any Time of his Life, be raiſed, it is as much his own and the ſame Body, as that which he had at his Death, which, it is aſſerted, clearly ſolves the Difficulty, (2) for

(1) We have ſeveral Inſtances in Natural Philoſophy, that Bodies divided into never ſo minute Parts, tho theſe Parts be mixed and confounded with the Parts of other Bodies, may, by Chemical Operations, be reduced to their former State and Condition. And, (which is of nearer Affinity to the Subject in Hand,) after the Aſhes of a Plant have been ſown in a Garden, fairer and larger Plants have ſprung up, than had been known in that Place, where the Experiment was made.

See Boyl's Conſideration on the Poſſibility of the Reſurrection.

(2) That the Body of Man is not a conſtant and permanent thing, always continuing in the ſame State, & conſiſting of the ſame Matter; but ſucceſſive, (i.e) continually ſpending, and continually renewing itſelf; - every Day loſing ſomething of the Matter which it had before,

for Religion is concerned only to preſerve the Identity and Sameneſs of the Perſon, as the Object of future Judgement; and has nothing to do with that Kind of Identity againſt which the Objection can be ſuppoſed to have any Force. Were the Caſe otherwiſe, the Difficulty would be really as great in human Judgments in this Life, as in the divine Judgement hereafter. Suppoſe a Man ſhould commit Murder when he was twenty, and not be diſcovered till he was ſixty, and then brought to Trial; would common Senſe admit him to plead that he was not the ſame Perſon who committed the Fact; & alledge in Proof of it, the Alterations in his Body for the laſt forty Years? Suppoſe then, that inſtead of being diſcovered at ſixty, he ſhould die at ſixty; and ſhould riſe either with the Body he had at ſixty, or twenty,

and gaining new, is undeniably certain from Experience: for ſo much as our Bodies grow, ſo much new Matter is added to them, over & beſides the Repairing of what is continually ſpent; and after a Man is come to his full Growth, ſo much of his Food, as every Day turns into Nouriſhment, ſo much of his Yeſterday's Body is uſually waſted, & carried off by inſenſible Perſpiration thro the Pores of the Body: - which, (according to the ſtatick Experiment of Sanctatorius, a learned Phiſician, who, for ſeveral Years together, weighed himſelf exactly every Day,) is according to the Proportion of FIVE to EIGHT, of all that we eat or drink.

According to this Proportion, every Man muſt change his Body ſeveral Times in a Year. New Parts are perpetually added by Nutrition, and old Ones are carried off by Perſpiration.

twenty, or in any intermediate Time, would not the Case be just the same with Respect to the future Judgment? Evidently it would be the same: which shows that the Article of the Resurrection, (as far as it is a Support of Religion, and a future Judgment,) stands quite clear of this Difficulty.

As this, therefore, is obviated, - so neither shall we suppose with others, in Order hereto, that in like Manner as in every Grain of Corn there is contained a minute insensible seminal Principle, which is itself the entire future Blade & Ear, and in due Season, when all the rest of the Grain is corrupted, unfolds itself visibly into the Form: so our present mortal and corruptible Body may be but the Exuviæ, as it were, of some hidden, and at present insensible Principle, which at the Resurrection will discover itself in its proper Form; by which Way there can be no Confusion of Bodies possible in Nature.

In this Sense, it is not without some Weight, that St. Paul made use of this Comparison; and that all the ancient Fathers of the Church have alledged the same Similitude.

Submitting these as plausible in the Case, I shall obviate the Objection, by showing the mistaken Notion on which it is founded, in asserting the Confusion of Bodies.

It is agreeable to Reaſon and to the Obſervations of Philoſophers and Phyſicians, to believe that the BONES and the MUSCLES, the TENDONS and NERVES, and all the eſſential conſtituent Parts of human Bodies, are of ſo firm and ſolid a Subſtance, as to ſuffer little Alteration during our Lives, when once they are come to their full Growth and Proportion; but do continue the ſame till we die; and the Alteration which they undergo, before Men come to their full Stature, is by Addition of Parts, and not by the Diminution of thoſe with which we were born. (1)

Now,

(1) It appears from a late Diſcourſe of a learned Phiſician, (Dr. Haver's Oſteology; ſecond Diſcourſe of Acretion and Nutrition,) that Nutrition is a Supply of the fluid Parts, and that the proper Subſtance of the ſolid Parts ſuffers no Diminution, but on ſome extraordinary Caſes; and therefore can ſtand in no Need of a Reparation but in ſuch a Caſe; for the whole Body is vaſcular, (i.e) made up of Veſſels, repleniſhed with their ſeveral Subſtances; ſo that in an Atrophy, the Fibres become dry, and the Nerves and Veſſels are contracted for Want of Spirits and Juices, which before filled and diſtended them. But the ſolid Parts are of ſo durable a Subſtance, that they can ſuffer no Diminution, but by ſuch Corroſives to diſſolve them, as muſt produce Ulcers, and ſuch as would affect the Fibres with ſo intollerable Pains, that the Torments of the Stone and Gout would be moderate and eaſie to them, and which, in a Conſumption, would be univerſal, in all Parts of the Body; whereas, there is no ſuch Symptom in any Part; for, in the greateſt Conſumptions, the Bones are found to retain their entire Bigneſs; though they are ſooner diſſolved by a corroſive Liquor, (ſuch as *Aqua fortis*,) than muſcular Fibres of equal Quantity or Weight.

Now, it is not improbable to think that the ORIGINAL STAMINA, which contain all and every one of the ſolid Parts and Veſſels of the Body, even the minuteſt Nerves & Fibres, are themſelves the ENTIRE BODY; & that all the EXTRANEOUS MATTER, which, coming-in by Way of Nouriſhment, fills up and extends the minute and inſenſible Veſſels, of which all the viſible and ſenſible Ones are compoſed, is not, ſtrictly and properly, Part of the Body; & that conſequently, while all this extraneous Matter, which ſerves only to ſwell the Body to its juſt Magnitude, is in continual Flux, the original Stamina may remain unchanged; and ſo, no Confuſion of Bodies will be poſſible in Nature. — Beſides,

And with Reſpect to the FIRST Growth and Increaſe of theſe ſolid Parts, as well as to their Support and Continuance afterwards; it is to be obſerved, that ſcarce the hundredth Part of our Food is digeſted into the Subſtance of our Bodies, all the reſt being rendered back again into the common Maſs of Matter, either ſenſibly or inſenſibly. (1)

The Change, therefore, being only in the variable and accidental Parts, which are not neceſſary to conſtitute the Body of Man, the neceſſary conſtituent

(1) See Sanctorius, *de ſtaticâ Medicinâ*, Sect. 1, Aph. 6, 59, 60. and Sect. 111. Aph. 10.

ent Parts conſequently, (though they were changed and altered, as in ſome very rare Caſes they may,) being ſo few in Compariſon of the reſt, which make the whole Body, can hardly be ſuppoſed by the devouring of Cannibals, or by any other Accident, to become the conſtituent Parts of another Man's Body; for, from the Unfitneſs of them, as of Bones &c. to nouriſh, it may be concluded that little or Nothing of that which turns to Nouriſhment, can be ſuppoſed to be of this elaſtick, ſolid Nature.

And further, — Conſidering the great Changes which happen in our Bodies in the continual Flux of Parts, and the ſmall Proportion again, which the conſtituent or neceſſary eſſential Parts have to the reſt, we may conclude, (ſuppoſing thoſe Parts as well as others to ſuffer Alteration,) that it is the greateſt Odds, that the conſtituent Parts which turn to Nouriſhment, do not, by that Nouriſhment, happen to belong to the conſtituent Parts of another Man's Body, who is nouriſhed by them, when he comes to die.

So that if a Man ſhould live wholly upon human Fleſh, which it is not to be believed that ever any Man did; yet, perhaps, it would be above an hundred to one, whether any conſtituent Part of his Body were made up, when he died, of the conſtituent

Parts

Parts of any other Man's. And, beſides theſe things,

It muſt be granted by all, who believe a God & a Providence, that a PARTICULAR Providence may take ſuch effectual Care of us, as to reſerve to every Man his own Body in all the eſſential Parts of it: "The Hairs of our Head are all numbered," (i.e) they are as well-known to God, as they could be to us, if we had counted them never ſo exactly; and therefore much more the NECESSARY Parts of us are under his Cognizance and Care.

Theſe neceſſary conſtituent Parts, then, being the ſame, God may ſupply the reſt, as he ſhall ſee fitting, and the Body will be the ſame at the Reſurrection, that it was in this Life. Which brings me,

III. To point out the advantageous Qualities with which we ſhall then be inveſted. "The Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible."

The Truth and Reaſonableneſs of the Doctrine being already eſtabliſhed, it ought to be no Objection that ſeveral Particulars relating to it exceed our Comprehenſion.

"How the Dead are raiſed," is ſufficient that God knows, and by no Means wonderful that WE do not, as we ſcarce know how any one Part of the Courſe of Nature is carried on. And,

As to the Inquiry that follows, "With what Body do they come?" we are taught, they will be ſo far the ſame Bodies, that every one ſhall have properly his own, and be truly the ſame Perſon he was before: but ſo far different, that thoſe of good Perſons will be ſubject to none of the Sufferings, Infirmities or Neceſſities of this Life, nor, (to uſe the appoſite different Expreſſions of Holy Writ,) "what is ſown in Corruption, will be raiſed in Incorruption; and what was ſown in Diſhonour, will be raiſed in Glory; and the natural Body will be raiſed a ſpiritual One:" "there the Wicked ceaſe from troubling; and there the Weary are at Reſt. There the Priſoners reſt together; they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor. The Small and the Great are there; and the Servant is free from his Maſter." "God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain: for the former things are paſſed away." But,

The particular Manner of ſpiritual Bodies, or the Diſtinction that ſhall be made in them, between the more eminent in Goodneſs, and their Inferiors, "as one Star differeth from another in Glory;" theſe are things which we are not qualified, in our preſent State, to underſtand. And, as it is ſome Degree of

Weakneſs

Weakneſs, even to aſk Queſtions about them; ſo it would be much greater to attempt giving Anſwers.

However, this we may affirm, that the Bodies of Men at the Reſurrection, muſt ariſe in all the Perfection of an human Body; and therefore, muſt have no Part wanting. For,

All the Uſes of any ONE Part of our Bodies are not, perhaps, as yet fully known, and the Dependence which one Part hath upon another may be ſuch as that it may be requiſite that thoſe Parts ſhould be raiſed for their RELATIVE Uſefulneſs, which may ſeem to have no proper Uſe of their own after the Reſurrection. — The SIGHT, (for Inſtance,) may be capable of Improvements beyond what we now are able to conceive, as we may conclude from the Improvements which have been made by the Help of Inſtruments to aſſiſt it. And

Who knows but that in the glorified State, our Eyes ſhall have that Perfection, as to be able to diſcern the Contexture and Motions, and the whole Frame of thoſe pure, ſpiritual, and cœleſtial Bodies: and then thoſe Parts, which now to the naked View, and much more, when diſcovered intuitively by microſcopic Aſſiſtance, cauſe ſo much Admiration, will ſtill be much more admirable to behold, when they are thoroughly ſeen and underſtood by us.

To want, therefore, thoſe Parts which may ſeem to be then no longer of any Uſe, would be to want one great Argument of our Praiſe of God in the Contemplation of his wonderful Works.

This is mentioned only to ſhew, that an ordinary Fancy, if it be allowed to take the Liberty which ſome have done upon this Subject, might eaſily propoſe as probable Reaſons in Defence of the received Doctrines, as can be framed againſt them.

It is ſaid by Some, that thoſe Parts of our Bodies, which tho they will then have no direct Uſefulneſs, will yet be raiſed at the Laſt Day, to be Memorials to us of the Wiſdom of God in the Uſe we had of them in this Life — And,

By Others, that the Glory of God will be magnified in that He will have freed thoſe Members from the Corruption to which they were here ſubject. (1)

However,

(1) The holy Writings give every where the moſt probable Aſſurance that we ſhall come with the ſame numerical Body, which we enjoyed in this Life; for which, (not to be prolix,) I ſhall appeal only to two or three of the moſt pregnant & obvious Paſſages. "The Hour is coming, (ſaith our Bleſſed Saviour,) in which they who are in the Graves, ſhall hear the Voice of the Son of Man, & ſhall come forth:" which can reſpect only the Body, which was diſpoſited in the Grave; for the Soul never was there, and conſequently cannot, in Reaſon, be called from thence. Again,

The Account, in the Revelation, of the Reſurrection, is, that "the Sea

However, it ought to suffice Christians, that our Bodies will be like unto Christ's Body, and therefore

Sea gave up her Dead; and Death and Hell gave up the Dead which were in them:" which cannot be interpreted of their furnishing a Supply of fresh Matter for the Formation of new Bodies; but only of the Restitution of the respective constituent Parts of the former Bodies, which they had severally absorbed.

Parallel to these is the Doctrine of the Prophet Daniel, "the Many, (i.e the Group of all those) who sleep in the Dust of the Earth, shall awake, &c." but neither doth the Soul "sleep in the Dust," nor can Particles, which were never yet organized, be properly said to *awake* (i.e) to be restored to a Vigour and Activity, which they never yet enjoyed. — In the noblest and most ample Account of the Resurrection which was ever given to Man, the whole Process from the Dissolution to the Restoration, is marked out to us; and the Body, which is raised in Incorruption, in Power, in Glory, and spiritual, is no other than what was sown in Corruption, in Weakness, in Dishonour & natural.

We are further informed by the same Writer, - Not that the incorruptible and immortal Body, but that this very corruptible shall put on Incorruption; and this mortal, Immortality. — From hence arises the boasted Triumph over Death and the Grave, (which otherwise would be far from being well-grounded,) the Whole of their Prey being thus wrested from them, and the captive Body freed from the Durance in which they held it; whereas, were this suffered to remain in their Hands, & Recourse had to a NEW Creation, their Victory would then be incomplete, and Death would not only be the LAST Enemy which would be left to subdue, but remain still unconquered.

These Proofs are usually seconded by others drawn from natural Reason, such as, first, that Account being then to be given concerning things done in the Body, it is requisite that the Body should be present to answer the Charge; and, as it had a Share in the Transactions of this Life, it ought to participate also of that State of Happiness or

fore ſhall have the full Perfection and Proportion in all their Parts, conſtituting an human Body, as his Body had after his Reſurrection. "We know that we ſhall be like him;" and, as for any thing further, it will be Time enough to know it at the Reſurrection. — Only we may obſerve from the Text & Doctrine before us, & the Context of the Whole, that

Miſery, which will be the Reſult of them: and, 2dly, that the Reſurrection of the ſame Body is abſolutely neceſſary, to conſtitute an Identity of Perſon. — See page 343, &c. preceeding.

There is yet one Argument more in this Caſe, [viz] that this muſt be the Caſe with Reſpect to thoſe Bodies which ſhall have no Occaſion for a Reſurrection, as Enoch and Elijah, and thoſe who ſhall be found alive at the Day of Judgment. — This Obſervation may alſo ſerve for an Anſwer to thoſe, who raiſe an Objection to this Point, by doubting, whether it be poſſible for this Fleſh and Blood to inherit the Kingdom of God, for Corruption to inherit Incorruption; in a Word, whether theſe very Bodies be capable of Glorification. — In their preſent State, undoubtedly they are not; which muſt be the Apoſtle's Meaning in that Aſſertion, (1 Cor. 15. 50.) for if we make him ſpeak too literally, we ſhall find him contradicting expreſs Facts, not only in the Caſes above mentioned, but in the Tranſfiguration of our Bleſſed Saviour alſo, as recorded by St. Matthew. Not that this Form or Figure will be perpetual, or confine the Body to the ſame Lineaments after its Glorification; yet doubtleſs, there is no Abſurdity in ſuppoſing, that we may at leaſt in this Form, await the Doom which ſhall change us "in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye." In a Word, (whatever hath been advanced notwithſtanding,) it may yet have left all its groſs and fœtid Particles in the Grave, and be ſtill raiſed in every Reſpect, not only ready to put on, but be even actually endued with Incorruption and Immortality; which, it is preſumed, is in no Way affected by the external Accidents of Form or Figure, ...

that our Bodies, now liable to Pains, to Diſeaſes and Death, "ſhall die no more, but ſhall be equal unto the Angels;" like them they will become immortal in their Duration, and conſequently freed from thoſe troubleſome Accidents to which they are now expoſed, - for, the Reward being eternal, the Subject of it muſt be eternal alſo. "It is ſown in Corruption, it is raiſed in Incorruption." "The Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible." — Again,

Our Bodies, now vile and periſhing, ſubject to Diſeaſe and Deformity, will be raiſed glorious, ſplendid & bright, - "they will ſhine like the Sun, and as the Stars in Brightneſs for ever more," being "faſhioned like to the glorious Body of our Bleſſed Saviour," whoſe Transfiguration even here on Earth, "was bright and gliſtering."

This is credible from the Relation ſo often mentioned in Scripture, between Chriſt and all true Chriſtians, He being the Head, and they the Members; and from the mighty Power He will exert for the effecting this Change, it being "according to the mighty Power, whereby He is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf." "It is ſown in Diſhonour, it is raiſed in Glory." — Again,

Our Bodies, now ſubject to Wearineſs by Labour, to Impotence by Waſting and Diſeaſes, and to De-

cays by Age, will be raiſed agile, ſtrong and active; "they ſhall be able to follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth;" they will be indued with ſuch Strength, as ſhall ſupport them forever in the ſame State, without any Change or Decay. "It is ſown in Weakneſs, it is raiſed in Power. — Again,

Our Bodies, now acted only by animal and vital Spirits, will then be poſſeſſed and acted by the Holy Spirit; and being now fitted chiefly for the Operations of Fleſh and Blood, and affected with the natural Senſations of Pleaſure and Pain, will then be refined, as to become proper Inſtruments for the Operation of our Minds, to which they will be no longer an Impediment, as they are in this Life, but will ſerve them, and depend upon them; they will be pure and refined, at once capable of, and panting after ſpiritual and intellectual Enjoyments, influenced only by Reaſon, (or ſomething higher than Reaſon,) Love, Piety and Truth. — "It is ſown a natural Body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual Body." And! "Such Honour have all his Saints."(*)

As to the Wicked, their Bodies alſo will be immortal; but, to their Sorrow, as Immortality will be their Curſe; no longer liable to Death, but condemned to a Life, to which even Annihilation itſelf were greatly preferable, as being fitted for that e-

ternal

(*) Spiritual is here oppoſed, not to corporeal, but to natural animal; ſignifying thereby, the Subtilty and Purity of our heaven Bodies. In this State our Spirits are forced to ſerve and attend on o Bodies; but in the future World, our Bodies will wholly ſerve o Spirits, miniſter to, and depend upon them; a natural Body is fitt for this lower, baſtile, earthly World; a ſpiritual Body is fitted to ſpiritual inviſible State, to live like Saints in Heaven.

When once we arile into Life, or riſe to that ſtrug gle of the Spirit with the Flesh, which are now ſo troubleſome and reluctant to us. Our Flesh will then [illegible]

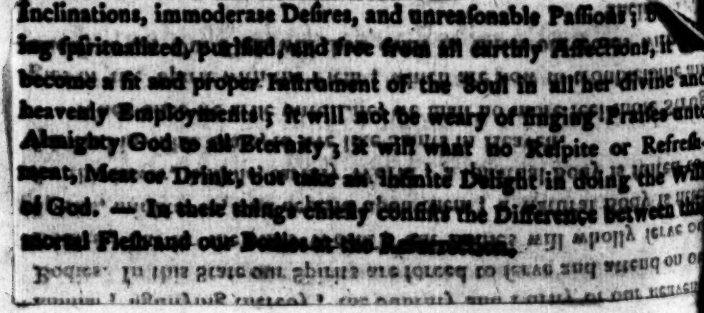
ternal Punishment, in which they will always suffer without consuming. Instead of shearing in the Glory of the Righteous, even that little Beauty and Lustre, they formerly enjoyed, will fade and perish: an horrible and ghastly Deformity will take-place, & the wretched Soul diffuse an universal Blackness throughout the Mass. Instead of the refined and spiritual Bodies of the Just, they will rise a gross and fœtid Lump, fit Fuel for everlasting Burning - racked with unconquerable and insatiate Passions - and in Lieu of the calm Complacency and Resignation of the Righteous, they will breath out nothing but Curses and Despair. (1) Such a Transformation will at last succeed the final Doom, and this will be the miserable State of those whose Folly hath subjected them to the Sentence of the "second Death."

I shall only observe, that with Respect both to the Deformity of the Wicked, and the Glory of the Righteous, there is the strongest Probability, that there will be different Degrees; each respective Soul being endued with such a grosser or purer Body, as may qualify it for receiving the Sensations of a greater

(1) Whatever Transformation the Wicked shall undergo, it will undoubtedly set them as much nearer to the Form & Nature of Devils, as the Just will approach to the Figure and Likeness of Angels.

days by Age, will be raiſed agile, ſtrong and active; "they ſhall be able to follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth;" they will be indued with ſuch Strength, as ſhall ſupport them forever in the ſame State, without any Change or Decay. "It is ſown in Weakneſs, it is raiſed in Power." — Again,

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greater or leſs Degree of Happineſs or Miſery, according to its particular Merit. For, beſides that it were inconſiſtent with even common Juſtice, that unequal Merits ſhould meet with equal Rewards. St. Paul, (ſpeaking in Alluſion to the Body,) deſcribes expreſly ſeveral Stages and Degrees of Glory. "There is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars;" and even "as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, ſo alſo (ſays he) is it in the Reſurrection of the Dead."

Our Saviour himſelf aſſures us, that "in his Father's Houſe are many, (or rather, VARIOUS) Manſions;" nor doth he deny that there will be "a Right Hand, and a Left, in his Kingdom," but only waves the Promiſe of what he ſays belongs properly to the Diſpoſal of the Father.

After the View which we have taken of the foregoing Subject, and of the Advantages to be poſſeſſed by good Men after Death, the firſt Sentiment which ſhould ariſe in our Minds is Gratitude to Heaven for the Hopes which we enjoy by the Means of the Chriſtian Religion.

How depreſſed and calamitous was the human Condition, as long as the Terror of Death hung, like

a dark Cloud, over the Inhabitants of the Earth; when after all the Toils of Life, the melancholy Silence of the Grave appeared finally to close the Scene of Exiſtence; Or, if a future State opened behind it, THAT State teemed with all thoſe Forms of Horror which conſcious Guilt could ſuggeſt to a terrified Imagination.

The happieſt Change, therefore, that ever took place in the Circumſtances of the human Race is that produced by the Diſcoveries with which we are bleſſed, concerning the Government of the Univerſe, the Redemption of the World, and the future Deſtination of Man.

How much Dignity is hereby added to the human Character and State! - What Light and Cheerfulneſs introduced into our Abode! - What eternal Praiſe is due to Him, who "hath called us out of Darkneſs into this moſt marvelous Light;" and, "according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, to an Inheritance INCORRUPTIBLE, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us?" — Again,

The next Effect which the Subject we have conſidered, ſhould produce, is an earneſt Deſire to acquire thoſe Advantages which good Men enjoy after Death.

The Road which leads to them is plain and obvious [viz] by the good Offices of this Life which are the only preparatory Foundation for Happineſs in the next; for, "without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord."

It was "this Hope towards God, that there will be a Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt," that made St. Paul ſo careful to "exerciſe himſelf, always to have a Conſcience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man."

The firm Belief of a Reſurrection to another Life ſhould make us very careful how we demean ourſelves in this, and afraid to do any thing, or to neglect any thing, that may defeat our Hopes of a bleſſed Immortality, and expoſe us to the extreme and endleſs Miſery of both Body and Soul hereafter. — Particularly,

It ſhould be an Argument to us to "glorify God in our Bodies as well as in our Spirits," and to "uſe the Members" of the One, and the Faculties of the Other "as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs, unto Holineſs"

We ſhould reverence ourſelves, and take heed not only how we defile our Souls by ſinful Paſſions, but alſo how we diſhonour our Bodies by ſenſual and carnal Luſts, ſince God hath deſigned ſo great an Honour

nour and Happiness for Both at the Resurrection.

Indeed, So often as we think of a blessed Resurrection to eternal Life, the Thoughts of so glorious a Reward should make us diligent and unwearied in the Service of our Lord, who can, & will prefer us to infinitely greater Honours than any which are to be had in this World.

This Inference the Apostle makes from the Doctrine of the Resurrection [viz] that we should "be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; for as much as we know that our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord."

Indeed, We may begin this blessed State while we are here upon Earth, by "setting our Hearts and Affections upon the things that are ABOVE," and by "having our Conversation in Heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the mighty Working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Indeed,

The duly preparing ourselves for this important Change & happy State, is the great Business for which we were sent into this World; in Respect of which, all the other Labours of Life, are mere Trifles.

To bestow our chief Care and Pains upon Mat-

ters of the greateſt Conſequence, hath always been eſteemed a main Point of Wiſdom and Prudence; as a Neglect of this Kind has been juſtly branded with the Character of the utmoſt Folly.

Since, therefore, we ſhall hereafter be certainly tranſlated to endleſs Joys, or conſigned to everlaſting Torments, nothing can be wiſer than to take ſuch Meaſures as may ſecure the One, and prevent the other. This Method will give the utmoſt Reliſh to all the Bleſſings of Life, and prove the beſt Preſervative againſt the Terrors and Apprehenſions of Death: the anxious Fears of which proceed not ſo much from Death itſelf, as from the Conſequences of that unchangeable State in which it fixes us. And, tho' Reaſon may reconcile us to it, as we are Men; yet, Religion alone can make it comfortable to us, as we are Chriſtians.

To theſe Advantages of a due Preparation for our future State, (neceſſarily inferred & promoted from the Conſideration of the glorious Change of our Bodies at the Reſurrection,) we may add,

Laſtly, The Comfort it will give us under all bodily Pains and Sufferings here on Earth.

One of the greateſt Burdens of human Nature, is the Frailty and Infirmity of our Bodies, the Neceſſi-

ties

dience;

dience; the Hour, in Expectation of which he patiently bears the Burden and Heat of the Day, all the Difficulties of Duty, & the Diſcountenance he meets with from a wicked & profane World. That Cloud of Witneſſes the Apoſtle mentions, "who had Trials of Mockings and Scourges, of Bonds and Impriſonment, were ſtoned, ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the Sword, wandered in Deſerts and Mountains, deſtitute, afflicted, tormented," not only bore their Afflictions & Tortures with Patience, but would "not accept Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection." To a Soul ſupported with an Aſſurance of the divine Favour in that Day, the Honours and Afflictions of this Life will be equally trifling and contemptible. Is Poverty and Diſgrace his Portion? he knows it will determine in a few Years, and that an Eternity of Glory awaits his Perſeverance. Are the Infirmities of the Body, Pains and Diſeaſes, his Complaint? his Faith reminds him of the Day when "this corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal, Immortality;" when this Body ſhall no longer be that burdenſome Incumbrance it now is, ſubject to Pain, & Weakneſs, and Paſſion; but ſpiritualized to a State of eternal Youth, and Strength, and Beauty, to a Similitude with the glorified Body of Chriſt our Saviour.

With

With what lively Impreſſions of Gratitude does he reflect on that unwearied Care of Providence which conducts Man from the Womb, and gradually leads him to an Immortality of Glory; who protects him when alive, and guards him when dead, and makes even his Grave but a Repoſitory to preſerve the Reliques and Treaſures of his Body; and from thence, as from a Wardrobe, re-apparels the new Man ſtrengthened out of the Materials of the old, and fitted for the Fruition of himſelf in Glory? With what Joy does

ment; — Theſe pleaſing, animating, ſoul-ſtrengthening Thoughts, ſupport true Believers in the midſt of the World's Hatred, Satan's Malice, and the Agonies of diſſolving Nature; for the Time is coming, (if we be careful to prepare ourſelves for it,) when we ſhall be cloathed with other Kinds of Bodies, free from all theſe Miſeries and Inconveniencies, which Fleſh and Blood are ſubject to: for theſe Bodies will be changed and faſhioned like to the glorious Body of the Son of God. At which Time there will be no fleſhly Luſts to fight againſt the Soul, nor Law in our Members to war againſt the Law in our Minds; no Diſeaſe to torment us, nor Danger of Death to amaze and terrify us. When all the Paſſions and appetites of our outward Man will be ſubject to the Reaſon of our Minds, and our Bodies will partake

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With

does he ſhare in the Triumphs of his Redeemer, & behold the Bonds of Death broken, and the Power and Malice of Hell defeated, our Nature again cleanſed & purified from the Stains of original Pollution, & reſtored to that Felicity, that Life & Immortality, which the Sin of Adam had ſpoiled us of. It is undoubtedly, therefore, &c. (under)

It is undoubtedly, therefore, one of the greateſt Conſolations of the Virtuous, the Sober and Religious, under the Trials of Life, to reflect that all Tears ſhall, e're long, be wiped away from their Eyes, - the Wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the Weary be at Reſt: - Faith be turned into Viſion, - Grace into Glory, and Hope into full and eternal Enjoyment; - Theſe pleaſing, animating, ſoul-reviving Thoughts, ſupport true Believers in the midſt of the World's Hatred, Satan's Malice, and the Agonies of diſſolving Nature; for the Time is coming, (if we be careful to prepare ourſelves for it,) when we ſhall be cloathed with other Kinds of Bodies, free from all theſe Miſeries and Inconveniencies, which Fleſh and Blood are ſubject to: for theſe Bodies will be changed and faſhioned like to the glorious Body of the Son of God. At which Time there will be no fleſhly Luſts to fight againſt the Soul, nor Law in our Members to war againſt the Law in our Minds; no Diſeaſe to torment us, nor Danger of Death to amaze and terrify us. When all the Paſſions and appetites of our outward Man will be ſubject to the Reaſon of our Minds, and our Bodies will partake

of the Immortality of our Souls. It is but a very little While, that our Spirits will be cruſhed with our Bodies. At the Reſurrection they will be refined from all Dregs of Corruption, and become ſpiritual, and incorruptible, and glorious, & evrey Way ſuited to the Activity and Perfection of a glorified Soul, and "the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect."

To the Ungodly indeed, & the Sinner, the Proſpect is not thus eaſy and entertaining: it is with Confuſion and Aſtoniſhment he muſt reflect on that Day, when every ſecret Impiety of his Life, the Sins of his Chamber and his Cloſet, will be produced before Men and Angels, and an eternal irreverſible Sentence be pronounced upon the Actions of Men. Eternity is in itſelf a Proſpect that human Nature cannot look into without a religious Awe and Concern; our Thoughts are loſt in the endleſs View, and return to us wearied & unſatisfied, without finding either Bounds or Place to fix on.

Now to him who can reaſonably expect to paſs all this endleſs Duration in Torments, as great as an offended God can inflict, how dreadful muſt the Approach of it be, and the Terrors of it who can bear? Trumpet, without Terror: for, who can expect the Comfort of thoſe righteous Souls, who ſhall then meet their Saviour in the Clouds? - not as an angry Judge

Judge, but as a Friend and Deliverer: as one who comes to rescue them from Rottenness and Corruption to crown their Faithfulness, and to give them the full Possession of all their Hopes; indeed, to pour upon them the Riches of his Mercy, and to fix them in the Enjoyment of Bliss unspeakable, - unchangeable, and full of Glory? for "such Honour have all his Saints."

Under these Sentiments, let us endeavour, (by cultivating Holiness in all its Branches, under the Faith of a Redeemer, and his Merits,) to maintain this Hope in all its Spirit and Energy; looking for that glorious Day, when, (in the utmost Extent of the prophetical Expression,) "Death will be swallowed up in Victory;" and Millions of Voices, after the long Silence of the Grave, shall burst out at once into that triumphant Song, — "O DEATH! WHERE IS THY STING! - O GRAVE! WHERE IS THY VICTORY!" And, when we see Death disarmed, and the Terrors of the Law silenced, let us bless God for Jesus Christ, by whom the Precepts of the Law were perfectly fulfilled, and its Penalty endured; that so we might not only be delivered from the Curse; but called to inherit the Blessing. Upon the Whole,

The Belief of the Resurrection of the Body, should

bear? He is tormented even before his Time, and his Torment is begun even here on Earth.

Let us then, in this our Day, ſuffer theſe Reflections to have their proper Efficacy, in exciting us to a due Preparation for that deciſive Hour: let it influence every Thought, Word and Action of our Lives, to remember that the Judge ſtandeth at the Door; that the Day approaches when all that are in the Graves ſhall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and come forth to Judgment; when the dark Priſons of the Earth, &c. (under)

when the dark Priſons of the Earth ſhall be unlocked and its dead Mould quickened into Newneſs of Life; when every Soul ſhall take her proper Body and the Earth, and the Sea, and every Element bring-back all ſcattered Particles, and reſtore them to their primitive Form: - When the Power of the Almighty, which firſt made Man out of Duſt, and that Duſt out of nothing, ſhall once more exert itſelf, by making that Duſt, the Man it was before.

Happy, thrice happy will be thoſe bleſſed Souls who then will be able to hear the Sound of the laſt Trumpet, without Terror: for, who can expreſs the Comfort of thoſe righteous Souls, who ſhall then meet their Saviour in the Clouds? - not as an angry Judge

dge, but as a Friend and Deliverer: as one who
nes to reſcue them from Rottenneſs and Corrup-
on to crown their Faithfulneſs, and to give them
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The Belief of the Reſurrection of the Body, ſhould

make us reverence ourſelves, and not pollute our Bodies, thoſe Temples of the Holy Ghoſt, with ſenſual and carnal Luſts; but by Purity and Soberneſs to prepare them for that Honour & Happineſs they are deſigned for. — It ſhould ſupport us under thoſe Miſeries and Infirmities to which our Bodies are ſubject in this Life; ſince, when we take them up again, they will no more be liable to Pains, or Diſeaſes, or to Diſſolution; for, "Death will be ſwallowed up in Victory." — It ſhould mortify in us all ſenſual Satisfaction, that our Bodies may become obedient to the Motions of God's Holy Spirit. — It ſhould comfort us upon the Death of our Friends, who are not periſhed, but fallen aſleep, and ſhall awake again in greater Perfection and Glory. — It ſhould arm us againſt the Fear of our own Death, ſince we are aſſured that, after our Bodies are mouldered into Duſt, they will be quickened at the general Reſurrection, and be glorified in all its Parts. — But Above all, it ſhould be conſidered as an Engagement to univerſal Obedience, and the ſtrongeſt Motive to "exerciſe ourſelves in keeping our Conſciences void of Offence both towards God & Man," that we may not forfeit that bleſſed Immortality of our whole Man, Body and Soul, which our Bleſſed Saviour hath promiſed to all thoſe who perſevere in

his Service to the End of their Days, well-knowing, that whatever other Labours may be fruſtrated, "thoſe in the Lord will never be in Vain." Let Love, therefore, and Gratitude, and Intereſt concur to render us ſteadfaſt, and immoveable, and always active and abounding in his Service.

SERMON LXXXIV.

Of the future Judgment.

II Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the "Judgment-Seat of Christ."

Being not only the Created (1) & Preserved, (2) but, when we by Transgression fell, the Redeemed of the Lord also; (3) "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?" (4) It is impossible: for "All these things shall be dissolved:" (5) "It is appointed unto Men once to die, (6) and to rise again, (7) that "they may appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ."

The Christian Religion, (whether we consider the Authority of those who first published it, or the weighty Arguments it contains, & their Agreeableness to the most prevailing Passions of human Nature,) is, in all Respects, the best formed of any to accomplish so noble a Design as the Reformation of Mankind. But, That

(1) Sermon 67, 68. (2) Sermon 69, 70. (3) Sermon 71, 72, 73, 74. (4) Sermon 75, 76, 77. (5) Sermon 78. (6) Sermon 79, 80. (7) Sermon 81, 82, 83.

That which is of chief Influence hereto, & which contains every other Motive and Argument to Duty, is, the Doctrine of a future Judgement which enforces every Precept of the Chriſtian Covenant. — The being one day to appear before the Judgement-Seat of Chriſt, and to give an Account of our Actions, is the ſtrongeſt Enforcement to every Chriſtian Duty. For how awful and alarming is that Repreſentation which the ſacred Scriptures give us, of the ſolemn Day approaching which is to determine our Fate forever! - Let us contemplate the ſtupenduous Scene; for who can dwell upon ſuch intereſting Reflections, without ſerious Thoughts, and heavenly directed Reſolutions? - The Particulars are theſe.

Firſt, The Certainty of a future Judgment; "We muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat."

Secondly, The Persons who are to appear: and they are All, for "We muſt All appear."

Thirdly, The Perſon who is to be our Judge, [viz] Chriſt; "We muſt all appear before the Judgement-ſeat of Christ." — Of theſe in their Order.

Firſt, Of the Certainty of a future Judgment: In ſpeaking to which Point, I ſhall Firſt evidence it from Natural Light or Reaſon; and then,

II. From Holy Writ, or divine Revelation, which does but confirm what Reaſon teaches, as Reaſon makes credible what Revelation affirms. And,

Firſt, Let us ſee what Reaſon, (as ſhe was the earlieſt, and is yet the moſt extenſive Preceptreſs,) has to offer upon this Subject. Indeed,

It muſt be owned, that the NATURAL Proofs of a Judgment to come, (had it not been made an Article of our Faith,) are exceedingly powerful and ſtrong.

The Nature both of God and Man clearly evince it; and the natural Notions and Expectations of it with which the Generality of Mankind are poſſeſſed, and the promiſcuous Diſtribution of the Bleſſings and Evils of this Life to wicked and good Men are what more clearly confirm it.

All the Reaſons which prove that there is a God, and a Providence; that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; that the holy Scripture is divinely inſpired; & that the Chriſtian Religion is true: all theſe Reaſons make it appear that there muſt be a Judgment after this Life: for if we had nothing to fear, or hope for after Death, all theſe things would be falſe.

If we conſider God, we muſt allow him to be a Being of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, as well as Holineſs and Juſtice. Now, God

God created Man with a Deſign to make him happy: — A Deſign, worthy the Idea we have of him, and the Perfections of his Nature! And,

If God made Man to be happy, and hath inſpired him with an invincible Deſire after a State of Happineſs, how ſhall we reconcile it with the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, if ſuch a State can no where be found? — and yet, ſo it is, if there be no other World wherein it is attainable beyond that wherein we now are.

To ſeek for Happineſs here, is to "ſeek for the Living among the Dead:" The Depth, the whole Extent of the material World ſaith, it is not in me: "The Eye" (the nobleſt and moſt excellent of all the Senſes) is not ſatisfied with ſeeing;" not to add, that it is, many Times, dangerous to us, as being apt to betray us into Irregularities and Diſorders. We might obſerve alſo how unſatisfactory the Entertainments of the other Senſes are, and what Errors and Diſorders they frequently betray us into, eſpecially when we indulge them to the utmoſt. — We cannot have a better Authority in the Caſe than that of Solomon, who had ranged all the Fields of ſenſual Pleaſure and Delight, and had Power and Wealth to command whatever he deſired; and, he ſeems to have given himſelf up to ſo great Exceſs, with a

particular Deſign, that he might be able to determine, from his own Experience and Knowledge, how far the greateſt Luxury, in Conjunction with the greateſt Fortune could contribute to the real Happineſs of Man; for, "what can the Man do, (ſays he,) that cometh after the King?" (i.e) Who is ſo competent a Judge in this Argument as myſelf, who by the Splendor and Superiority of my Condition could command all the "Delights of the Sons of Men, and with-held not my Heart from any of them?" — Yet, upon a deliberate and particular Review of his Actions, he ſums up the Whole, and ſays, "It is all Vanity, and!" (what is worſe,) "Vexation of Spirit." And!

Can we imagine that the all-wiſe and good God hath deſigned ſuch a World as THIS for the Scene of our utmoſt Happineſs, wherein the Improvement of our nobleſt Faculties tends only to ſhew us our Defects, and many Times to betray us into Inconveniencies?

The Powers of the inferior Animals are perfectly ſuited to their Station. They know nothing higher than their preſent Condition. In gratifying their Appetites, they fulfil their Deſtiny, and paſs away. Man, alone, comes-forth to act a Part, which carries no Meaning, and tends to no End. Endowed with

with Capacities, which extend far beyond his preſent Sphere; fitted by his rational Nature, for running the Race of Immortality, he is ſtoped ſhort in the very Entrance of his Courſe. — He ſquanders his Activity on Purſuits, which he diſcerns to be Vain. He languiſhes for Knowledge, which is placed beyond his Reach. — He thirſts after a Happineſs, which no Confluence of worldy Greatneſs can ever ſatisfy. — He ſees and laments the Diſaſters of his State, and yet, upon this Suppoſition, can find nothing to remedy them.

Has the Eternal God any Pleaſure in ſporting himſelf with ſuch a Scene of Miſery and Folly, as THIS Life muſt exhibit in his Eye, if it had no Connexion with another? - Did he call into Exiſtence this magnificent Univerſe, adorn it with ſo much Beauty and Splendour, and ſurround it with thoſe glorious Luminaries which we behold in the Heavens, only that ſome Generations of mortal Men might ariſe to behold theſe Wonders, and then diſappear forever? How unſuitable in this Caſe, were the Habitation to the wretched Inhabitant! How inconſiſtent the Commencement of his Being, and the mighty Preparation of his Powers and Faculties, with his deſpicable End! How contradictory, in fine, were every thing which concerns the State of Man,

to the Wisdom and Perfection of his Maker!

We are hereby, therefore, constrained to believe, that as God made Men intelligent Beings, there is another Life in which he has abundantly provided agreeable Entertainment for all their intellectual Powers; and not cheat them with Appearances only, & false Delusions of imaginary Enjoyment. — This is what Reason, when we consult the Idea of an all-wise and good God, dictates, and Revelation abundantly confirms. — But further,

If we consider Man, both his Nature and Condition manifest him to be an accountable Creature.

The Reasonableness and Equity of such an Enquiry is obvious, as we are RATIONAL and FREE Beings; and we may add also, that the Knowledge of it is peculiarly suited to us, as we are FRAIL Ones.

We perceive that we are the ONLY Members of the visible Creation, who have a Power of acting upon rational Principles, and a Capacity of being accountable for our Actions. The Brutes, indeed, have a Kind of Freedom, and an Instinct, which in some is so remarkable, as almost to imitate Reason: but yet, not the least Part of their Life or Actions is to be accounted for upon the Principles of Reason; which was given us above them, to govern all the

Powers

Powers and Faculties of our Souls and Bodies by it; It ſhews us the Cauſes & Effects of different Actions and things, and thereby convinces our Judgments; and by that Means, leads us to take the prudent and moſt excellent Way, by proving to us the Benefit or Danger attending ſuch or ſuch Courſes.

This natural and eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, every rational Mind is as neceſſarily ſenſible of, as every Eye diſtinguiſhes between Light and Darkneſs: And upon This is founded That natural Conſcience, whoſe gentle Admonitions, (and yet Admonitions that will be heard,) are to every Man the perpetual "ſtill Voice" of God.

Men have therefore, even by the Light of Nature, a Rule to walk by; They ſee, and diſtinguiſh, what is Good and Evil; They chuſe freely, and determine their own Actions; They reflect upon what they have done, with an unavoidable Senſe of having done well or ill: They are, conſequently, capable of accounting for what they do: being worthy either of Blame or Commendation, either of Puniſhment or Reward. Wherefore, if there be a God who governs the World, who gave Men theſe rational and moral Faculties, and has himſelf any real Concern about Good and Evil; it cannot but be One proper Act of his Government, to bring to Judgment ſuch

Creatures as are capable of being judged, and to reward or punish them according to their Behaviour. Which, since it is not done HERE, (as indeed the proper Season of Judgment, is not till the Time of Tryal be accomplished,) it follows necessarily that it must be done hereafter. — But further,

It is also highly suitable to our Nature that an Account be demanded of us as we are FREE.

God, by giving us a Power over our Actions, hath made us free Agents; which Liberty qualifies us to be governed by Laws, and makes us capable of Rewards and Punishments. We are not only endued with Judgment to tell us what is Right or Wrong, but with Freedom to follow or counteract that Judgment.

Thus free to act, and wise to know, shall not He who gave us these excellent Powers demand an Account of the Use we have made of them? Or, rather, should he not expect, that we so used them, that a Trial should redound to our Honour and Glory?

We are no further MORAL Beings, than we are ACCOUNTABLE Beings. But to whom, or for what are we accountable? Not certainly to absolute Fitnesses, the Loveliness and Beauty of Virtue. No: To be accountable, implies that we are accountable to some Superior; which Superior can only be God, or a di-

vine

vine Legiſlator: for, if we leave a God out of the Scheme, human Legiſlators can never reach the Conſcience, which is a Principle diſcernable only by him, from whom no Secrets are hid. — But,

Since God doth not judge us in THIS World for the Uſe of ſuch Powers, we muſt reaſonably expect him to do it in the next. (1) — Again,

As we are alſo FRAIL, as well as rational and free.

That Man is not a ſelf-ſufficient Being, all Syſtems concur in, and every Moment ſupplies us with too many Demonſtrations of it, to permit any to advance the contrary.

If Man were Lord of Nature, or even of himſelf, what a World of Gaity, Health, and Pleaſure ſhould we have! But alaſs! whilſt Vanity compliments us with a Superiority over Part of the Creation, ſomething elſe will whiſper to us, that we are inferior to even a Part of That, and that we owe a direct Vaſſalage to ſome Being or other, even more abſolute than what is in our Power to exact from the moſt ſervile of our own Dependants.

A very little Conſideration, then, proves Man not to be independent, and conſequently dependent; for thoſe two Claſſes comprehend the whole Chain of Beings

(1) See Ecc'es, iii. 17.

Beings; and that Link which is demonſtrably not the uppermoſt, depends manifeſtly upon ſome other above it. Now, The Conſequence of Dependance is a Neceſſity of endeavouring to pleaſe, & of avoiding to offend; and this under certain Penalties: a Leſſon Man may learn from his own Behaviour towards thoſe whom he conſiders in that Light, with Reſpect to himſelf.

Man, then, in his Conſtitution, both as an intelligent, and as a dependent Being, is accountable for his Actions - In this Reſpect, it was ſuitable for an all-wiſe and merciful God to acquaint his Creatures with the ſtrict Examination they were to undergo when they enter into his Preſence, when this Life is over. For,

Such a Knowledge, if duly attended to, would balance the evil Inclinations which the Devil ſtill ſuggeſts to us, and raiſe us to almoſt the State of Perfection from whence we fell, and ſpur us on to magnanimous Perſeverance in good Purpoſes. For

Though our Nature is moſt happy when we follow Virtue, (as being moſt ſuited to it,) yet, as it is a fallen one, we want ſome Aſſiſtance to lead us from Sin and Sorrow, and keep us in, or guide us to, the Paths of Peace and Virtue. Now, to this,

A ſerious Conſideration of the ſtrict Examination we

we are to undergo, as to the Use we have made of all our Faculties, Opportunities, and Powers, will most certainly preserve us from abusing them, and make us desirous of using them to the best Advantage.

Again, What Metaphysicians call the moral Obligation, is not an ideal or imaginary thing; but there is a real and essential Difference between Good and Evil, a certain and determinate Rule of Right & Wrong, as appears from the indelible Impression of it upon the Mind; from the universal Consent of all Mankind, in Fundamentals and Essentials, tho under the strong Biass of different Educations; and from the Tendency of Virtue and Vice to preserve or hurt the Uniformity and Regularity of the System which ought to be inviolate; but most clearly from the Nature of the Supreme Being: For, if there be a Power above us, He must delight in Virtue. The strongest and most zealous Efforts towards it in Man, are but faint Rays of those perfect Qualities in the Deity, who therefore must make much nicer, as well as truer Distinctions between those perpetual Contrarieties. — Again,

Man is not the Author of this Rule, because it is unalterable, seeing a mutable & unstable Being can never communicate Immutability. An Obligation is founded in the Will of its Author; but it is im-

poſſible for Man to apply this to himſelf, becauſe he is bound to an apparent Neceſſity in this Matter, & his Will has nothing to do in it: for he cannot perſuade himſelf, that Piety, Honour, and natural Affection, can be Vices; any more than that Light can be Darkneſs, or Darkneſs Light; ſweet can be bitter, or bitter ſweet.

Since Man, then, is not himſelf the Author of this Law, it muſt follow, that he is accountable for the Breach of it to him who is: Its genuine and inherent Weight, & the irreſiſtable Conviction it carries with it, being a Proof that the Legiſlator did not trifle when he made it, nor will be trifled-with in the Obſervance of it.

If God made us, and not we ourſelves, then, not we ourſelves, but He is to give us Laws, and require Obedience from us. If All we have is from Him, then, what is more reaſonable than for Him to call us to an Account, and to paſs Judgment upon us according to the Uſe we have made of what hath been committed to our Truſt?

As to the NATURAL Notions and Expectations with which the Generality of Mankind are poſſeſſed of a future Judgment, they are ſtrong in Favour of the Point before us.

God

God hath furniſhed us with Underſtandings to diſcern betwen Good and Evil; and if we do but reflect upon what paſſeth within us, we experience a certain Conſciouſneſs which bears-witneſs to all our Actions, whether good or evil; and acquits or condemns us accordingly; (1) and this, not from any Dread of human Laws, but even in Caſes where they cannot reach, and to Facts that cannot be diſcovered. (2)

But

(1) Mankind, all, more or leſs, even in their darkeſt Ignorance, have always had ſome Perſuaſion of a future Recompenſe: which, however mixed with Errors, yet, being thus univerſal & laſting, muſt have been grounded in Nature and Truth. And, the wiſer and better any Perſons were, amongſt the Heathens, the ſtronger and more rational Belief they had of this Doctrine: which, yet, was not always owing merely to their Wiſhes and their Hopes: for, the worſt of Sinners, that were fartheſt from deſiring a juſt Reward hereafter, feared it, whether they would or not.

(2) Every Man has in himſelf a lively Emblem of the Manner of proceeding in the future Examination, and an Earneſt of the Sentence that will be pronounced. For we find a Tribunal erected in our Hearts, and a Judge ſitting upon it, and ſummoning all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, to appear before it.

We are brought to this careful Review, though our Wills ſtrive againſt it; and we cannot but judge of them according to their different Nature and Qualities, tho we would fain confound the Diſtinction, and call Evil, Good; and Good, Evil." —— —— (1)

"When we do well," our Conſciences tell us, that "we ſhall be accepted. When we do ill," it fails not to aſſure us, that "Sin lieth at the Door."

Serm. LXXXIV.

But perhaps, it will here be objected, & ſaid, that what we fondly call Conſcience, is no more than the Agitation of a weak Mind, early inſpired with falſe Terrors, and the Reſult of a prejudiced Education.

If this was really the Caſe, why does not He, who knows it to be nothing, diſcard and get-rid of it? Surely he who is wiſe enough to make ſuch a notable Diſcovery, is too much a Philoſopher to be afraid of a Shadow. But we ſee often that ſuch Men, [viz] the greateſt Atheiſts and Libertines,) have been ſoberly and religiouſly brought up; the Prejudices of Education, therefore, it is plain, are not invincible, or theſe Men had not been what they now are: But, when they have puſhed their Victory as far as it will go, diſcarded Honour, ſhut out Virtue, eradicated all the Principles they imbibed from the Nurſe, the Parent, or the Preceptor, & even ſhook-hands with Humanity, yet Conſcience will ſtick to them ſtill, indeed ſtick the cloſer, the more they ſtruggle to get rid of it. Like Care (1) in the Poet, it will follow them whitherſoever they go, nor will the fleeteſt Ship, or ſwifteſt Courſer carry them out of the Reach of it. Wherever we go, Conſcience accompanies

(1) —— —— —— *Timor et Minæ*
Scandunt eodem quo Dominus; neque
Decedit ærata Triremi, et
Poſt Equitem ſedet atra Cura.

companies us; whatever we ſay, do, or think, it regiſters and records in Order to the Day of Account. It is, therefore, of an high and awful Power; being next and immediately under God, our Judge: It is the Voice of God; "what it bindeth or looſeth on Earth, is accordingly bound or looſed in Heaven." The greateſt Deference & preciſe Obedience, therefore, is due to its Command. Its Conſolations are, of all, the moſt ſweet; and its Condemnations, (only excepting thoſe by the Mouth of Chriſt in the laſt Judgment,) moſt terrible: accordingly as Death approaches, theſe Fears grow ſtronger than ever, concerning ſomewhat, which is yet to come. (1) Now,

If there be no Life after this, and no future Account to be given of our Actions, why do we ſo generally diſquiet ourſelves with vain Fears of things that are not?

Can

(1) That ſome Perſons are able to overwhelm theſe Apprehenſions under Buſineſs and Purſuits, to drown them in Intemperance and Defilement, to divert them by Pleaſures and Amuſements, to ſet up little Cavils againſt them, or even to affect to ridicule them; is no Objection in the leaſt to their being juſt & well-grounded. The Feeling is plainly natural: and every one of theſe Methods to get rid of it, is plainly a Force upon Nature. Often it returns with double Terror, for having been unjuſtly driven away; & ſeldom, or never, can the moſt thoughtleſs, or the moſt hardned Perſon, loſe entirely thoſe Fears, which are rooted in the very Bottom of our Souls; and which if we could loſe, we ſhould only be the more ſurely miſerable; for ſtill the Foundation of them would remain unſhaken. Serm. LXXXIV.

Can we imagine that God hath implanted thoſe natural Apprehenſions in us merely with a Deſign to delude and impoſe upon us? Surely not.

But rather, it is more evident, that a future Judgment being agreed upon by the beſt and wiſeſt Part of Mankind, in all Ages, is one fundamental Article of Religion; and that, therefore, the inward Teſtimony of our own Minds concerning it, is the Voice and Language of Nature, underſtood by all Mankind; the Weak and the Wiſe, the Illiterate and the Learned, univerſally aſſenting to the Evidence of it. (1) — But, Could

(1) *Omnium Gentium Conſentio, Lex Naturæ putanda eſt.*

This Reaſon to neceſſitate the Evidence, and enforce the Truth of the Doctrine of a future Judgment, from that in-born and in-bred Notion and Apprehenſion, which all Men have by Nature, that there is ſuch a thing, together with the general Expectation of all Men, that there will be ſuch a thing, is very great. How ſlight ſoever it may appear at firſt; yet, upon Conſideration, it ſeems to be the moſt effectual and convincing; for, ſuch an internal Argument as this, which ſprings up in the Heart, & from the Heart of every One, has a greater Weight in it, than all the Reaſonings of Philoſophy put together, and will oblidge Men, if not to hope for, yet at leaſt to fear a future Immortality; either of which is the ſilent Voice of Nature, teſtifying the Reality of a Life to come. For, whatever it is that All Men think will be, without Doubt it ſhall be, becauſe whatſoever All Men agree in, is the Voice of Nature itſelf, and conſequently muſt be true: For the Dictates of Nature are ſtronger than the Probats of Reaſon, (i.e) of Reaſon not abſtracted, but as it is in us Mortals; and therefore, of all other Arguments, that which is drawn from natural Impreſſion and Inſtinct

Could we, for a While, ſuppoſe Conſcience an accidental

Inſtinct, is moſt forcible and concluding, and the Knowledge ariſing from ſuch Impreſſion or Inſtinct, tho it be not ſo full and perfect, yet it is more certain and infallible than any other Knowledge whatſoever, ariſing from a Man's own fallible Diſcourſe and Reaſoning. It is confeſſed, indeed, that Knowledge, the Produce of Inſtinct and natural Impreſſion only, is not ſo full, ſo perfect, nor perhaps ſo properly termed Knowledge, (becauſe the Word *ſcire* properly denotes *per Cauſas ſcire*,) as that which is concluded by Demonſtration, or drawn from an evident Connexion of one thing with another, or a Conſequence of one thing from another; becauſe when a Man knows any thing by natural Impreſſion or Inſtinct only, he knows not the Reaſons of what he knows; he knows ὅτι ἐστι, that there is ſuch a thing; but not διότι ἐστι, why it is; nor perhaps τί ἐστι, what it is; we mean not in the exact & diſtinct Nature of it neither; & yet notwithſtanding, this Knowledge is, (as far as it reaches,) more certain and infallible than any Concluſion drawn from our own Reaſoning and Diſcourſe can be.

1ſt. Becauſe this inbred Notion, or this Knowledge which we have of any thing by natural Impreſſion or Inſtinct, is not, (as all other human or acquired Knowledge is,) a Concluſion made by us from our own Diſcourſe and Judgment, which is always fallible and ſubject unto Error; but it is a Concluſion made in us by Nature, or rather by the God of Nature himſelf, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived; and therefore, whatſoever we know in this Manner, muſt needs be certain.

2dly. Becauſe if the Knowledge we have by our Inſtinct, were not certain and infallible, this received and as yet undoubted Maxim both in natural Philoſophy and Divinity, [viz] That God and Nature do nothing in Vain, would not be true: For if that were not ſo indeed, which all Men in general, and every Man in particular is naturally inclined to believe to be ſo; then that natural Impreſſion or Inſtinct, by which they are inclined to think ſo, would be planted in them to no Purpoſe; The Affirmation of which is not only a Reproach in Nature,

accidental Principle, and all our Hopes and Fears the

but a Blaſphemy againſt God himſelf; becauſe indeed, that which we call Nature, is but God's ordinary Method of working in and by the Creature.

3dly, That the Knowledge, which is an Effect of natural Impreſſion or Inſtinct, is indeed certain and infallible, will eaſily and clearly appear, if we do but conſider thoſe Creatures which have not the Uſe of Reaſon, or of Inſtruction, of Revelation, of Tradition, or any other Means of Knowledge (excepting that of Senſe) but this of Inſtinct or natural Impreſſion only; and yet we ſee, that thoſe irrational Creatures have their Knowledge more immediately, more certainly, and more infallibly, than any Man's Deductions from his own Diſcourſe & Reaſon. For Inſtance, who amongſt us is there that doth or can know his Enemy, (after the cleareſt Diſcovery he can make of him,) ſo certainly, or avoid him ſo ſuddenly as the *Lark* does the Vultur at the firſt Sight? What Sick Man, nay, what Phyſician knows his own Diſeaſe, and the Remedy for it ſo exactly, as the *Dog* knows his own Vomit, and that which will procure it? Who amongſt us knows the Seaſons more exactly, or obſerves them more duly or punctually than the *Stork*, the *Crane*, and the *Swallow*? And laſtly, What Inhabitant foreſees the Ruin of his own Houſe ſo certainly, or avoids it ſo ſeaſonably, as the Vermin his Inmates? and yet the *Lark* never ſtudied *Machiavel*, nor the Dog *Hippocrates*, neither were the *Stork*, the *Crane*, or the *Swallow*, ever taught by natural Philoſophy to diſtinguiſh Seaſons; nor the Vermin by judicial Aſtrology to fore-ſee caſual and contingent Events: But it hath pleaſed the all-wiſe and gracious Creator, to ſupply the Defects of Reaſon in theſe helpleſs Animals, with a Knowledge, which tho' it be not ſo large and perfect, yet is more certain and infallible, eſpecially in thoſe things that are neceſſary for the Preſervation of their Exiſtence and Species, than any Knowledge attainable by Men, by Diſquiſition or Speculation, becauſe, (as before ſaid,) it is a Knowledge not procured by, but infuſed in them by God and Nature, who

cannot

the Result of Prejudice in Education, we are then naturally

cannot err; and such a Knowledge as this, (we mean for the Kind of it,) is that which all Men have of a Judgment to come, or of something to be suffered by Evil-Doers after this Life; a Knowledge planted in them, and not learned by them, but originally in every Man, & universally in all Men; & whatsoever is so, must needs be taught them by God and Nature, and consequently cannot be erroneous or uncertain. It is true, indeed, that some particular Men, or some particular Sort or Sect of Men, may believe and maintain false and foolish Opinions, such as have neither Solidity of Truth in them, nor Reality of Object without them: But then such Opinions as these had their Creation and Production at first, from some one Man's Fancy, and from thence derived by Education and Tradition, may afterwards infect many: And thus the Opinion and Practice of Idolatry, or the Worship of more Gods than One, came into the World, and spread itself over most Part of Mankind, for it was not so from the Beginning. But the Dictates and Impressions of Nature do very much differ from Conceits or Imaginations of Fancy, & from Traditional Errors of Custom and Education; In the first Place, Because the Dictates & Impressions of Nature are not only general in most Men, but universal in all Men; whereas Conceits of Fancy, and Traditional Errors of Custom or Education, flowing from thence, tho they may be, and often are consented to, and believed by many; yet none of them ever were, or ever will be consented to, and believed by all. Thus were the Philosophers of old, and thus are the Christians at this Day divided into their several Sects and Heresies.

Secondly, The Dictates and Impressions of Nature, as they are universally in all Men, so are they originally in every Man without Teaching. And hence it is that St. Paul tells us, "that the Gentiles that had not the Law," (he means that were never taught the Law as the Jews were,) had yet, notwithstanding, that very Law in Regard to the fundamental Notions of Piety, Justice, and Sobriety, written in all and every one of

naturally led to inquire who first invented Conſci-
ence,

their Hearts by Nature itſelf, and together with the Law, by neceſſary Conſequence, a Belief & Expectation of a Reward for Good, and Puniſhment for Evil after this Life, as appears by their Conſciences accuſing or elſe excuſing them, even for thoſe things which were not puniſhable or rewardable, nor perhaps diſcernable by any but themſelves here in this World. Whence it follows, that thoſe Notions of Law & Suggeſtions of Conſcience, (which St. Paul tells us, were in all the Gentiles without Teaching,) muſt needs be Dictates and Impreſſions of a ſimple and uncorrupted Nature.

3dly, The Dictates and Impreſſions of Nature, (*in Quantum & Quatenus*) or as far as they are merely from Nature, receive neither Addition nor Diminution, (as they may do either from other Principles;) as they are univerſally in all Men, and originally in every Man without Inſtruction, ſo are they equally and alike in all Men without Diſtinction, in the *Gentile*, as well as in the *Jew*, in the *Barbarian* as well as in the *Greek*, in the *Pagan* as well as in the *Chriſtian*, & in thoſe that have no Learning, as well as in thoſe that have; whereas Opinion ariſing from Conceit of Fancy, and Knowledge which is the Product of human Reaſon, and Faith itſelf, which is an Effect of, and Aſſent to divine Revelation, are all of them ſtronger or weaker, more or leſs in their ſeveral Subjects, according to the Strength, Meaſure, & Working of the ſeveral Principles from whence they flow. And conſequently they are none of them equal in all Men, nor any one of them equally at all Times in thoſe that have them: But the other natural impreſſive Knowledge is the direct contrary; ſuch a Knowledge as this is that Apprehenſion which all Men have, or would have, (if their natural Impreſſions were not defaced in them,) of a Judgment to come, or of a Reward for the Good, and a Puniſhment for the Wicked after this Life: For never was there any good Man but hoped for it, or any wicked Man, but at ſome Time or other was afraid of it. In a Word, There never was in any Age of the World, either a Nation in general or

ence, or, (which is all one,) who first invented the Foundation

of any one Man in particular, that owned the Being of a God, but he acknowledged also a Judgment to come; altho the Notion they perhaps had of it, was but in a confused and imperfect Manner; as appears by those Elysian Fields, or Places of Rest and Happiness for the Good, and those black and burning Lakes of Fire and Brimstone, the Places of Torment for the Wicked after this Life; which the Poets or Heathen Divines speak of, as the general and received Opinion of all Mankind.

This was the general and the constant Doctrine and Opinion of the Heathen, which was registered, but not invented by the Poets; being indeed in Substance the same, which we Christians are now taught more perfectly by divine Revelation, but was always instilled by Nature itself, tho more obscurely and imperfectly, into all Mankind. Indeed, those very Men themselves, who both by their Words and Actions would make others believe that they believed no God, do many Times tremble upon the Apprehension and Expectation of something terrible that is to come; so that whilst they deny a Judge with their Mouths, they acknowledge a Judgment in their Hearts. And indeed, bad Men are not always so bold, as they would seem to be, nor so little afraid of God, as they would have the World think they are. For, of all Men, these Atheists, that would be, whenever they are in any great Extremity or Danger, have the basest & most dejected Spirits; whereas, a Man of the coldest and softest Constitution, if but innocent, looks Death, (we mean a present, an evident, a deliberate & an unavoidable Death,) with more Courage and Bravery in the Face, than a Man of the most fiery Temper, and most exalted Spirit, if he be guilty of any horrid or heinous Crime. And, what is, or can be the Reason of this, but that One is secure, and the Other is afraid of some terrible thing after Death, which can be no other, but that general Doom or Judgment we now speak of, the Harbinger or Fore-runner of which hath taken up his Abode in the Breasts of all Men: [viz] Conscience, which hath always, (unless it be asleep, or seared, as St Paul calls it, with an hot Iron,) a

Foundation of it: for, every Stream has a Spring, & every

Regard to Sin here, and to Punishment hereafter; which whosoever affirms that he believes not; he must pardon us if we say, that we do not believe him; for it is impossible that those in-born Characters, that Hand-Writing of God and Nature, that innate Impression, we mean, or Instinct, which all Men have of a future Reward or Punishment, should be utterly blotted out of any Man; forgotten perhaps, or not thought upon, or defaced it may be, but absolutely lost and annihilated it cannot be; and therefore if there be any Man afraid or loath to own this Truth, he betrays a secret Belief of it by his Fears; or, if he do not now, he will do so at some Time or other hereafter. — But,

Against what hath been said, it may be objected, that if the Belief of a Judgment to come were, (as we have affirmed it to be,) an Effect of natural Impression or Instinct, then it would be universally equal in all, and consequently equal in every One of the same Kind; for we see (say they) that all Animals, by Instinct, are equally alike in their separate Natures, and every particular one, as much at one Time, as at another. Besides, it is apparent, that all Men do not equally believe this Truth; indeed, it is to be feared, that some Men do not believe it at all; and of those who do, some believe it at one Time more, and less at another. And therefore that this Belief of a Judgment to come, (in whomsoever it is,) is the Effect of some other Cause, and not of natural Impression or Instinct.

To this we answer, that it is true indeed, that all in-bred or in-born Impressions or Instincts, are universally and constantly equal in all Particulars of the same Kind; and always continue to be so in those Creatures which are not capable of either Infection from without, or Corruption from within. And such are all living Creatures besides Man; which neither sway the Rule of Nature, nor swerve from it, but are always constantly and equally guided by it, as having no other Principle from without to corrupt or controul it. But with Men it is far otherwise, for in them those Notions of Nature that are born with them, may

every Tradition a firſt Foundation; and the moſt fertile Imagination cannot ſupply us with a ſatisfactory Account, or ſay what gave Birth to ſuch Ideas, but a divine and indelible Impreſs, ſtamped upon

may, and do receive Augmentation or Diminution, Alteration or Corruption from ſome other Principles, either without us, or within us. For Inſtance, thoſe in-born Notions that there is a God, that there will be a Reward for thoſe that live Well, and a Puniſhment for thoſe that live Ill, with others, may and do receive Augmentation from divine Revelation, and from right Reaſon, and from a good, either religious or moral Education and Converſation; ſo that what was imprinted in us by Nature, may be, and is improved and confirmed in us by other Principles, and therefore, we do not deny, but a Chriſtian may have a more conſtant, and more confirmed, and more perfect Knowledge of God, and of a Judgment to come, with other Matters, than he that hath no other Knowledge of theſe and the like things, but by the Light of Nature only. And, by the ſame Reaſon, one Chriſtian may have a more conſtant, diſtinct & perfect Knowledge of the ſame Truths, than another Chriſtian, according as the One may be more or leſs enlightened by thoſe higher Principles than the Other, or may make a better or a worſe Uſe of them. Again, as the Knowledge we have by inſtinct may be augmented and improved, confirmed and perfected; ſo it may be leſſened and weakened, defaced and corrupted, & indeed, ſo obſcured, for a Time, as it may ſeem both to ourſelves and others to be quite extinguiſhed, and that either by our own depraved Reaſon, together with our perverſe Will and Affections from within us, or by ſuch evil Education, or a worſe Converſation from without us, which many Times infuſe ſuch Opinions, (both concerning God and Ourſelves,) into us, as are quite contrary to, & deſtructive of our firſt Notions; and yet becauſe they are more ſuitable to our perverſe Will and Affections, they are frequently received and defended by our depraved Reaſon, againſt the Light of Nature itſelf, Serm. LXXXIV.

upon the Soul by the Finger of God. (1)

Our Senſe, then, of Right and Wrong declares us Candidates for Immortality; for we cannot ſuppoſe the Almighty would have wantonly tortured us with the Stings of a condemning Conſcience, any more than he has the Beaſts of the Field, if we, like them, were at Death to be eternally annihilated; - if our Exiſtence was wholly terminated by the Life that now is, we ſhould, like the Brutes,, have been permitted to taſte every animal and ſenſual Pleaſure unallayed by the Senſe of Guilt, - a Thirſt for Knowledge would never have been implanted in us, which can never be ſatisfied this Side the Grave: - a Mind that was to be confined to Earth would never have been inclined to meditate on things beyond the Skies; the All-wiſe Creator, who has made nothing in Vain, would never have given us the Capacity of thinking on the ſublime Joys of a State of Glory, and made us deſirous of poſſeſſing them if they were only the Chimeras of a diſtempered Brain.

A

(1) *Timor fecit Deos.* "Fear ma le the Gods," (ſays Epicurus.) Without much Subtilty we may reverſe the Aſſertion, and ſay, *Deus fecit Timorem*, "God made Fear:" otherwiſe Man had certainly by no Means thought of Virtue or Vice; "for we had not known Sin but by the Law;" and if he had eſcaped Puniſhment for any Tranſgreſſion, would have reſted contented; but any Man who is ſo unfortunate as to be in that Situation, will tell you how far that is from being the Caſe.

As to the last natural Evidence mentioned in Favour of a future Judgment, [viz] "The promiscuous Distribution of the Blessings and Evils of this Life to wicked and good Men," both the Justice of God, and the Nature of the thing itself, are invincible in Proof of it. (1) It

(1) It is not only requisite, but necessary, that there should be a Judgment after this Life for the Manifestation of the divine Justice: For though whatsoever God doth is just, and that because God doth it, yet does it not always appear to be so. Now God is not only just in himself, but will appear to be so to others, and will have his Justice confessed and acknowledged, at one Time or other, by the Hearts and Consciences of all Men. And though the Creator is not obliged to account to the Creature, for the Manner how, or the Reason why, he doth any thing; yet if he will have the Creature convinced of a thing, that it is so or so, he must needs some Way or other, make it appear to the Creature that it is so; and, therefore, for this Reason it is necessary, that at some Time or other there should be a general, a publick, and a formal Tryal, wherein the Actions of every particular Man should be discovered to all in general, both Angels and Men; that so the Actions, being compared with the Issue, and the Merit balanced with the Reward, God might, (as the Apostle says,) "be justified when he judgeth," whether he absolves or condemns, and that not only by those that stand by and are but the Hearers of it, but even by those themselves that are judged.

One of the main Ends, therefore, (we humbly conceive,) why God hath appointed a Day to judge all the World, (as the Apostle speaks,) is to give the whole World Satisfaction, or to convince Men and Angels, whether they be good or bad, of the exact and precise Integrity, and Impartiality of the divine Justice in all, and every one of the Acts and Effects of it. And hence it is, that this general Doom is called in Scripture, "The Day of the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of

It is the Privilege and diſtinguiſhing Character of a rational Being to be able to look forward into Futurity, and to conſider his Actions, not only with Reſpect to the preſent Advantage or Diſadvantage ariſing from them, but to view them in their Conſequences through all the Parts of Time in which himſelf may poſſibly exiſt. If therefore we value the Privilege of being reaſonable Creatures, the only Way to preſerve it, is to make Uſe of it; and by extending our Views into all the Scenes of Futurity, in which we ourſelves muſt bear a Part, to lay the Foundation of ſolid and durable Happineſs.

By the Exerciſe of this Power of Reaſon, the wiſeſt among the Heathens diſcovered, that there was Ground for Men to have Expectations beyond this Life. They ſaw plainly that themſelves, and all things that fell under their Obſervation, were dependent Beings on the Will and Power of him who formed them; and when they ſought to find him, they were led, by a neceſſary Chain of Reaſoning, to the Acknowlegment of a ſupreme, independent, intelligent Being. They ſaw, in every Part of the Creation, evident Marks of his Power, Wiſdom, & Goodneſs: they diſcerned that all the inanimate Parts

God;" or the Day wherein God will reveal and make it appear, that all his Ways, and all his Judgments are Righteous.

Parts of the World acted perpetually in Submiſſion to the Law of their Creation; the Sun and all the Hoſt of Heaven were conſtant to their Courſes; and in every other Part, the Powers of Nature were duly and regularly exerted for the Preſervation of the preſent Syſtem: among Men only they found Diſorder and Confuſion. That they had Reaſon was plain; that they were intended to live according to Reaſon could not be doubted; and yet they ſaw Virtue often diſtreſſed and abandoned to all the Evils of Life, Vice triumphant, and the World every where ſubject to the Violence of Pride and Ambition. How to account for This they knew not: this only they could obſerve, that Man was endowed with a Freedom in acting, which the other Beings of the lower World wanted; and to this they rightly aſcribed the Diſorders to be found in this Part of the Creation. But though this accounted for the Growth of Evil, yet it rendered no Account of the Juſtice or Goodneſs of God in permitting Vice oftentimes to reign here in Glory, whilſt Virtue ſuffered in Diſtreſs. Upon theſe Conſiderations they concluded, that there muſt be another State after this, in which all the preſent Inequalities in the Adminiſtration of Providence ſhould be ſet right, and every Man receive according to his Works: and in this they reaſoned juſtly; — for,

If we believe there is a God, we must grant, that He is a Being of infinite Perfections, whereof one is Justice, which consists in the equal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments according to the Virtues or Demerits of Free-Agents; and consequently, being infinitely just, "he will not always suffer the Righteous to fail, nor the Wicked finally to go unpunished." The Foundation of all Government, is the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments; and the Greatness and Wisdom of a Supreme Governour, consists always in the Exactness of that Distribution. God therefore, whose Kingdom ruleth absolutely over all, who has the Power of all things immediately in his own Hands, who governs the Universe uncontroulably by the Counsel of his own Will, and whose Greatness and Wisdom are infinitely superiour to the Imperfect Excellencies of all finite Beings whatsoever; must consequently be as much more exact, than any mortal Sovereign in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, as his Wisdom is more impossible to be deceived, his Power more incapable of being resisted, and his Justice more impossible to be perverted. — By the Light of Nature itself, therefore, this Doctrine was known with great Certainty, that God would reward every Man according to his Deserts; it being evidently con-

contradictory to the very Notion of the Being of God, and of his governing the World, that his ſupreme Kingdom ſhould be eſtabliſhed upon any other Meaſures; than thoſe of everlaſting Righteouſneſs and unalterable Equity. Now,

If we reflect on the Condition of things in this Life, we ſhall find, that the Scales of Juſtice are here many Times unequally poiſed: Nothing is more evident, than that the Rewards and Puniſhments of this Life are not proportioned to the Virtues and Vices of Men. Perpetually we ſee "juſt Men, to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked: and wicked Men, to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous."

When we look further, and find that the beſt Men oftentimes fare WORST; that even the Deſire and Endeavour to pleaſe God frequently expoſes them to infinite Sorrows in this World, we ſtand amazed, and are ready to doubt whether theſe Appearances can be reconciled with the Belief that God governs the World. (1) But

(1) Notwithſtanding that the Moral Law is interwoven with the Civil, and committed to the ſame Guardians, yet there are many Violations of it, which cannot come under the Cognizance of an earthly Judge: ſuch are thoſe, to which a Man has no other Witneſs but his own Heart, which will indeed accuſe him, but at another Court: Beſides, we find, that tho a Man be even brought to the Trial, it is poſ-

But, ſince all Nature proclaims the Being and Power of God, and the viſible things of the Creation declare, in every Language of the World, the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of him who made them; under the Force and Conviction of this Evidence that there is a God, we can find no poſſible Way to account for his Juſtice and Goodneſs to the Children of Men, but by ſuppoſing that "he has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs." There muſt, in all Reaſon and Equity, be another Audit, or Time of Account after this Life, to the End, that, as Abraham ſaid, "thoſe that have received good things in this Life," and been Evil, "may be tormented; and thoſe that have received EVIL things in this Life, and have been GOOD, may be comforted;" - "For if in this Life only good Men

ſible for him to be acquitted on other Accounts beſides Innocence; Friendſhip and Intereſt are too ſtrong a Foundation for Partiality; and ſome, (who by the Way, are ſeldom the leaſt guilty,) are abſolutely out of the Reach of human Juſtice, merely on the Account of their Station. Honours, in this World, are under no Regulation; true Quality is neglected, Virtue is oppreſſed, and Vice triumphant; ſo that there lies a Neceſſity for one laſt and general Appeal to a Judge free from all theſe Imperfections, who cannot be deceived, impoſed upon, affrighted, corrupted or flattered, and who is moſt ſtrictly impartial, and "no Reſpecter of Perſons. — The Laſt Day will rectify all Diſorder, and aſſign to every one a Station ſuitable to the Dignity of his Character; Ranks will then be adjuſted, and Precedency ſet right.

Men have Hope in Chriſt, they are, (as the Apoſtle tells us,) of all Men moſt miſerable."

From this imperfect Diſtribution of Happineſs, what are we to conclude, but that this Syſtem is the Beginning, not the Whole of things; the Opening only of a more extenſive Plan, whoſe Conſummation reacheth into a future World; that the Scene is not cloſed in the preſent State of things; and that we ſhall exiſt after Death, & in That State of Exiſtence, the Scheme of a moral Government, (of which we evidently ſee the Foundations laid in this World,) ſhall be carried on to Perfection. This is That, in which we muſt reſt. This the Heart immediately embraceth, as the only clear Solution of all the Difficulties, with which, upon any other Hypotheſis, we are embarraſſed. Indeed,

Amidſt all this Diſorder, there are evident Marks of a Providence; but of a Providence that gives only Specimens and Earneſts of its Juſtice at preſent; (1) refer-

(1) What human Life preſents to the View of an impartial Obſerver, is, by no Means, a Scene of entire Confuſion; but a State of Order, begun, and carried on, to a certain Length. Virtue is ſo far from being neglected by the Governor of the World, that from many evident Marks, it appears to be a chief Object of his Care. In the Conſtitution of human Nature, a Foundation is laid, for Comfort to the Righteous, and for internal Puniſhment to the Wicked. — Throughout the Courſe of divine Government, Tendencies towards the Happineſs of

reſerving the full Vindication and Diſplay of itſelf for that future State, in which our Souls, being naturally immortal, are evidently, deſtined to exiſt; (1) and

the one, and the Miſery of the other, conſtantly appear. They are ſo conſpicuous, as not to have eſcaped the Notice of the rudeſt Nations. Over the whole Earth, they have diffuſed the Belief, that Providence is propitious to Virtue, and averſe to Guilt. Yet, theſe Tendencies are ſometimes diſappointed of their Effect; and that which Providence viſibly favours, is left, at preſent, without an adequate Reward.

God, in his preſent Adminiſtration of things, hath viſibly provided to give us Inſtances enough of his juſt Procedure towards the good and bad, and yet to leave us Inſtances enough of unrewarded Virtue, & proſperous Wickedneſs, to aſſure us he intends an After-Reckoning.

(1) Many are the Arguments which have been offered for the Immortality of the Soul, taken from the Nature of it as an immaterial Subſtance; which, tho not abſolutely neceſſary to the Eternity of its Duration, has, (we think,) been evinced almoſt to a Demonſtration: from the Extent of its Powers and Faculties, and the Improvement without End, of which it is capable: from its Paſſions and Senſations, as particularly from its Love of Exiſtence, its Horror of Annihilation, and its Hopes of Immortality: with that ſweet Satisfaction which it finds in the Practice of Virtue, and that Uneaſineſs which follows upon the Commiſſion of Vice: from that Nature of its Subſiſtence on Thought, which is manifeſtly the ſupreme Good of ſuch a Creature, and which hath no neceſſary Connection with the Enjoyments of mere animal Life: & laſtly, from the Nature of the Supreme Being, whoſe Juſtice, Goodneſs, Wiſdom & Veracity, are all concerned in this great Point: This, (i.e) the moral Government of God, ſeems to be the ſtrongeſt Argument which Reaſon offers in the Caſe.

If God acteth the Part of a Moral Ruler at all, we cannot doubt, but that his Government will be moſt perfect, and under which no Individual

and where all Men will receive according to their Works.

If God has already "set his Throne for Judgment," if he has visibly begun to reward & to punish, in some Degree on Earth, he cannot mean to leave the Exercise of Government incomplete. Having laid a Foundation of a great and noble Structure, he

dividual will find just Reason to complain. But, if there be one single Instance, (as in Fact there are, and have been many,) in which a Person perishes in Support and Defence of the Cause of Truth and Righteousness, this cannot be the Case. There remaineth, therefore, a future State, in which all things will be rectified.

This Conclusion was extremely reasonable: For from Justice not being administred at present, one of these two things must of Necessity be inferred; either that there will be a future State, without which Justice can never be done at all; or else that there is indeed no Government of the World, and consequently no God. Which being so; it is of the two, infinitely more reasonable, in the Judgment even of the bare Light of Nature itself, to conclude from hence that there will be a future State, than to conclude that there is no God: Because, of the Being of God, there are numberless other natural & collateral Proofs, with which this Side of the Argument is in Conjunction and Agreement; but there is no Argument in Nature, to lead us on the other Side with Any Probability, to imagine that there will be no future State. Upon these Grounds, therefore, the Best and Wisest Men even in the Heathen World, did believe in general a Judgment to come. And they who had not Capacity, to prove this Truth to themselves by Arguments of strict Reasoning; yet were convinced in their Minds by that natural Conscience of Right, which God had implanted in them, that God who governed all things, would sooner or later, in this World, or in another, reward every Man according to his Works.

Serm. LXXXIV.

he will, in due Time, rear it up to Perfection. - The unfiniſhed Parts of the Fabrick evidently ſhow, that a future Building is intended. All his other Works are conſtructed according to the moſt full and exact Proportion. In the natural World nothing is deficient, - nothing is redundant. It is in the Moral World only, that we diſcern Irregularity & Defect. It falleth-ſhort of that Order and Perfection, which appear in the reſt of the Creation. It exhibits not, in its preſent State, the ſame Features of complete Wiſdom, Juſtice or Goodneſs. But,

Can we believe, that under the Government of the Supreme Being, thoſe apparent Diſorders ſhall not be rectified at the laſt? Or, that from this Conduct towards his rational Creatures, (the chief Object of his Works,) the ſole Objection againſt his Perfection, ſhall be allowed to riſe, & continue unremoved forever? — Indeed,

Our perpetual Continuance was the great End that God had in his View, when he created us; and is therefore, the principal Point that we ſhould have in our View, thro the whole of our Lives.

As it is inconſiſtent, therefore, with the divine Juſtice, that Piety ſhould always go unrewarded, & Sin unpuniſhed, we may therefore conclude, that as God, for good Reaſons, (tho to us unknown,) forbears

bears Sinners, and doth not conſtantly beſtow preſent Rewards on holy and good Men, "He hath therefore aſſuredly appointed a Day, wherein He will judge the World in Righteouſneſs:" For, "ſhall not the Judge of all the Earth, do Right?" (1)

God,

(1) This Argument drawn from the ſeeming unequal Diſtribution of things here below, [viz] the Calamity of good Men, and the Proſperity of bad Men in this Life, is urged by ſome few of the Heathen Moraliſts, (who looked no further than the preſent State, and thought Man to be made only for an Inhabitant of the lower World, and conſequently expected every Man's Proſperity in this Life, ſhould have been proportionable to the Degree of his Virtue.) to prove the Non-Exiſtence of a God: For, (ſay they,) if there be a God, he muſt needs be juſt and good; and if he be juſt and good, he would not, he could not ſuffer good Men to be unrewarded, & evil Men unpuniſhed; much leſs could he, or would he endure that evil Men ſhould thrive in & by their wicked Courſes, & good Men fare the worſe for their Goodneſs, as in common Experience we ſee they do. — And truly: if our Concluſion concerning the Certainty of a Judgment to come after this Life, were not true, and theſe Inequalities of Providence were *final*, the Argument would, indeed, be ſtrong and unanſwerable againſt the Being of God. But the wiſer and better Men among them, ſaw further, and judged, that the things which *at preſent* appeared to *Us* ſo unequal, might eaſily, by the Conduct of a ſuperior Wiſdom, be made equal *hereafter*. By ſuppoſing, therefore, a Judgment to come, in which all good Men ſhall finally and fully be rewarded, and all wicked Men finally and fully puniſhed; we do at once vindicate the Power, the Wiſdom, the Providence, the Juſtice, and conſequently the very Being of God, from all Blaſphemy & Contradiction, notwithſtanding any Diſproportion or Incongruity whatever, that either is, or ſeems to be, between Actions or Events, Merit and Rewards, Men's Parts and their Fortunes here in this Life.

God, who made us, and is at all Times intimately preſent with us, perceives, with infinitely more Eaſe, all that paſſeth in our very Hearts, than we do one another's outward Actions: who, being perfect in Knowldge, diſtinguiſhes, in every Caſe, what is good from what is evil; and being perfect in Holineſs, approves the one and abhors the other. Indeed, we ourſelves are thus affected in ſome Degree; and his infinite Purity muſt, therefore, be infinitely more ſo.

Now, What he hates, he can puniſh as he pleaſes, & reward what he loves; for all Power is in his Hands:

On the Suppoſition of future Rewards and Puniſhments, a ſatisfactory Account can be given, of all the Diſorders which at preſent take-place on Earth. Chriſtianity explains their Origin, & traces their Iſſue.

Man, fallen from his primæval Felicity, is now undergoing Probation and Diſcipline for his final State. Divine Juſtice remains, for a Seaſon, concealed; and allows Men to act their Parts with Freedom on this Theatre, that their Characters may be formed and aſcertained. Amidſt Diſcouragements and Afflictions, the Righteous give Proof of their Fidelity, and acquire Habits of Virtue. But, if we ſuppoſe the Events of this Life to have no Reference to another, the whole State of Man becomes, not only inexplicable, but contradictory & inconſiſtent.

Indeed, the Hope, the Proof and Aſſurance of a future State is that alone which bears us up under the Afflictions of this Life, and makes us act our Parts conſiſtently in it.

There is nothing can render the Thoughts of this odd Life tollerable, but the Expectation of another; and wiſe Men have ſaid, that they would not live a Moment, if they thought they were not to live again; as it would be a Miſery to live, if we were to live for nothing elſe. "If we have Hope in this Life only, we are of all Men moſt miſerable."

Hands; all Nature depends on the Word of his Mouth; and "he is the ſame Yeſterday, to Day, & forever."

Even here among Men, the Juſtice of a wiſe and good Governour does not conſiſt in rewarding or puniſhing his Subjects immediately every Moment, but in doing it exactly and exemplarily at ſuch Periods of Time, at which it may have the greateſt and moſt extenſive Influence for the Benefit of his whole Dominions. And many more and greater Reaſons there may be for ſuch Delay in the Adminiſtration of God's Government; who, having all FUTURE Time in his Power, as well as the PRESENT, is ſure not to be diſappointed of doing that at a FITTER Time, which otherwiſe it might be expected he ſhould do NOW. Many more, We ſay, & greater Reaſons than there can be in any Human Government; which if it does not adminiſter Juſtice in the preſent Moment, it can never be certain it ſhall hereafter be able to do it at all.

Is it, therefore, to be ſuppoſed, that the righteous and holy King of all the Earth, after he hath planted his Laws in our Hearts, and made us for the very Purpoſe of obeying them, and filled us with a deep Senſe of what will follow if we diſobey them, ſhould ſuffer us after this, to deſpiſe and diſhonour him, to

injure his Creatures, abuſe Ourſelves, and diſappoint the great Deſign of his forming us; and yet take no Notice? - Doth he govern the World, to the LEAST Parts of it, with ſo much Wiſdom and Care, in every other Reſpect; & will he be ſo unwiſe and negligent, as to overlook the One thing, that deſerves his Attention above all; and make no Diſtinction "between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not?" It cannot be.

This ſeeming Inequality of the divine Favour to the Wicked, and of the Sufferings and Self-Denials of good Men, has been the Objection of atheiſtical, and the Complaint of pious Perſons, in all Ages; & has been all along anſwered in this Manner.

Our Bleſſed Saviour hath particularly obviated the Difficulties that may ariſe in our Minds from the Conſideration of theſe things, in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, which the Houſe-holder would not ſuffer to be plucked up, but ordered that they ſhould be let alone, and enjoy in common, with the Wheat, the Benefit of the Sun & Rain, till the Time of Harveſt: plainly intimating to us, that God, in the ordinary Courſe of his Providence, in the Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments in this Life, makes no very remarkable or viſible Diſtinction betwixt wicked and good Men, aſſigning the Reaſon

of

of it, "lest (says he) ye root-up the Wheat with the Tares;" (i.e) an End would soon be put to the whole Race of Mankind, if none but good Men were permitted to live. (1)

Tho therefore, we cannot give particular Reasons for many Events of Providence, for many seeming Inequalities of the divine Dispensations here, yet we may be assured, that at the great Day, all will be perfectly cleared up, as worthy both of the Wisdom and Justice of God: For, "tho' Darkness is his secret Place, and his Pavilion round about him, dark Waters and thick Clouds," (i.e) impenetrable to human Eyes, "yet Righteousness & Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat." (2)

Thus Nature, as well of the Supreme Being, as our own,

(1) The Wicked, by their Persecutions of the Righteous, give Patience and other Virtues to the Good; and by their Vices, they shew the Deformity of Wickedness, and of Course, the Beauty & Loveliness of Virtue: not to add, if it was not for the Wicked, the Good would but too probably be tempted into a Supineness and Indifferency in Religion. The Acrimony of the One, is a Spur to the Vigilance and Assiduity of the Other. So that in this Sense also, "God hath made the Wicked for himself," as well as "for the Day of Evil."

(2) See Vol. III. page 88. &c. The Afflictions and Sufferings of Men, reconciled with the Goodness of God. And also page 184, &c. The Inequality of God's Dealings with good and bad Men reconciled with the Justice of God. Serm. LXXXIV.

own, points out to us a Judgment to come, properly ſo called, and declares us ſubject to the Cenſures of a Court, ſeated beyond the Limits of this World.

The Reſult of theſe Conſiderations has been the general Conſent of Mankind from the earlieſt Infancy of the World, and even among its moſt ignorant and unlettered Inhabitants.

Whatever Parts of the primitive Syſtem of Religion were loſt after a general Diſperſion of Mankind, This ſtill kept its Ground, and the poliſhed Greek and the barbarous Scythian alike believed and trembled at it; and neither Time nor Vice could ever entirely wear it out; for the worſt Ages of Paganiſm did not believe it leſs, tho they had Cauſe to fear it more; the Proofs are extant in the Tracts of the Mythologiſts, the Philoſophers, and even the Poets, for almoſt the Space of two thouſand Years together. Hence their TARTARUS and ELYSIUM, and the many Fables and Stories raiſed upon the Occaſion. (1) Inſomuch, that the general Belief, (tho right in its Foundation, yet) in almoſt all the Particulars of it, was

(1) Alluding to the medly Scene of fantaſtical Horrors, framed upon their whimſical Notions of Juſtice, in the Puniſhments of *Tantalus*, *Siſyphus*, *Ixion*, the Daughters of *Danaus*, &c. to which they were condemned by their infernal Judges, according to the Nature & Quality of their Crimes.

was rendered ridiculous & abſurd. Hence it is that, among the Writers of Antiquity, we ſometimes find wiſe Men ridiculing the Follies and Superſtitions of the People,, & bad Men always arguing from theſe Follies againſt the very Notion itſelf, and calling in Queſtion the Reality of any future State.

Under theſe Circumſtances of the World, our Bleſſed Lord appeared to bring Life and Immortality to Light by the Goſpel.

How this fundamental Article of Religion ſtands upon the Foot of the Goſpel Revelation, we are next to conſider.

Sermon

SERMON LXXXV.

On the ſame Subject.

2 Cor. v. 10. "We muſt all appear before the "Judgment-Seat of Chriſt."

Tho the preceeding, and ſeveral other Reaſons and Proofs, as drawn from natural Religion, in Favour of a Judgment to come, ſhould be allowed not only highly probable, but evident; yet, as all Arguments are liable to Objection, it is a great Happineſs to Mankind in general, that God hath been pleaſed to make this NATURAL Principle of Religion an Article of our Chriſtian Faith. For,

While the Evidence of this great Article conſiſted wholly in mere human Reaſonings, about a Matter that was out of Sight: bad Men, though they could not help, ſometimes, believing enough to terrify them; yet, made a ſhift at other Times, to diſbelieve enough to make them tollerably eaſy in doing wrong: - and good Men, though they might have Hope ſufficient to influence them in common Caſes

yet

yet, often had not ſufficient to ſupport them under harder Duties, and heavier Afflictions than ordinary.

Hence the great Importance of a Diſcovery proceeding from God himſelf, which gives full Authority to all that Reaſon had ſuggeſted, and places this capital Truth beyond the Reach of Suſpicion or Diſtruſt For,

By the clear Goſpel-Revelation which we have of it, thoſe who are not able to reaſon juſtly on the Nature of things, or to carry on a long Train of Proofs, are convinced of the Truth hereof, upon the Authority of God, without being obliged to give any other Reaſon for it; whilſt they who are able to ſupport this Truth, with proper Arguments, are freed from the many Doubts and Difficulties which are apt to occur to them when they barely reaſon upon the Strength of their own Faculties, and "after the Manner of Men."

A divine Authority lays a firm and ſolid Foundation for the Mind to reſt upon. (1) And, This one Revelation, that "we muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt," is more forcible and con-

(1) *De Candelabro magna Luuerna tibi.*

We ſhould never idolize the Theorems of the SCHOOLS; St. Auguſtine ſhould be more to us than a thouſand of the Fathers, and one ſingle Page of Holy Writ, more than a thouſand of St. Auſtin's.

No Science is perfect, that is not grounded on infallible Principles.

Serm. LXXXV.

convincing than all human Proofs and Arguments in the World, put together concerning it.

As to the principle Point, then, there is no Difference between the Hopes conveyed to us in the Goſpel, and the Expectation built upon natural Reaſon: For, as the wiſeſt Men thought there muſt be, ſo the Goſpel aſſures us there will be "a Day in which God will judge the World in Righteouſneſs, & render to every Man according to his Works." (1) Thus

(1) The ſingle Point in which Religion is concerned, is to know whether Men ſhall be accountable hereafter for their Actions here. Reaſon tells us they ought to be ſo; But a great Difficulty ariſes from the Diſſolution of the Man by Death; a Difficulty followed by endleſs Speculations upon the Nature of the Soul, of its ſeparate Exiſtence, of its Guilt in this ſeparate State with reſpect to Crimes committed in another, and in Conjunction with the Body, and by other Difficulties of the like kind. But take in the Declaration of the Goſpel, that Soul and Body ſhall be as certainly united at the Reſurrection as they were divided by Death, and every Man be himſelf again; and there is no more Difficulty in conceiving that Men may be judged for their Iniquities hereafter, than there is in conceiving that they may be judged here, when they offend againſt the Laws of the Country. But ſtill,

There is yet another Prejudice remaining to ſome, [viz] that it is incredible that the Dead ſhall be raiſed.

To theſe we anſwer, (upon the Foot of Goſpel Evidence,) that the Dead have been raiſed - and, (upon the Foot of Reaſon,) that it is altogether as credible, that God ſhould be able to raiſe the Dead to Life a *ſecond* Time, as that he was able to give them Life at *firſt*, there is no Difference in the Caſes: they are Acts of One and the ſame Power.

See the preceeding Sermons on the Reſurrection.

Thus far, then, the Doctrine of the Gospel and the Dictates of natural Reason must stand or fall together. But,

Reason, (as we have seen,) being much depraved, therefore to shew the Expediency of the Christian Revelation, as to this Article, we have it asserted by the Apostle, that "Christ hath brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel," (i.e) he hath established this great fundamental Article of Religion upon a clear and firm Foundation.

So that, how much soever it was obscured to those who reasoned only upon natural Principles, and after the Manner of Men, it is now supported by a divine and infallible Authority: For,

In much Mercy, to awake and animate our best Desires, the eternal Lord of all hath declared, that an endless and unalterable State is reserved for us, happy or miserable, as we comply with, or refuse the Terms of his Covenant. And that, upon a Day appointed, He will pass the righteous Sentence upon all; when "those who have done good shall go into Life everlasting, and they who have done evil into everlasting Fire." (1) Look

(1) The Gospel contains a Mixture of the highest Clemency, and greatest Severity - the richest Mercy and strictest Justice - the most glorious Rewards and severest Punishments, to the Intent that such, whom the *former* cannot invite, the *latter* may awake, confound & astonish.

Look into the Gospel; there we shall find every reasonable Hope of Nature, nay, every reasonable Suspicion of Nature cleared up and confirmed, every Difficulty answered and removed. Do the present Circumstances of the World lead us to suspect that God could never be the Author of such corrupt and wretched Creatures as Men now are? our Suspicions are just and well founded. God made Man upright, but thro' the Temptation of the Devil, Sin entered, and Death and Destruction followed after.

Do we suspect, from the Success of Virtue and Vice in this World, that the Providence of God does not interpose to protect the Righteous from Violence, or to punish the Wicked? The Suspicion is not without Ground. God leaves his best Servants here to be tried oftentimes with Affliction & Sorrow, and permits the Wicked to flourish and abound. The Call of the Gospel is not to Honour and Riches here, but to take up our Cross and follow Christ.

Do we judge, from comparing the present State of the World with the natural Notion we have of God, and of his Justice and Goodness, that there must needs be another State in which Justice shall take-place? we reason right: & the Gospel confirms the Judgment. "God has appointed a Day to judge the World in Righteousness:" then those who

mourn

mourn shall rejoice; those who weep shall laugh, and the persecuted and afflicted Servants of God shall be Heirs of his Kingdom.

Have we sometimes Misgivings of Mind? Are we tempted to mistrust this Judgment, when we see the Difficulties which surround it on every Side; some which affect the Soul in its separate State, some which affect the Body in its State of Corruption and Dissolution. - Let us look to the Gospel: there these Difficulties are accounted for; & we need no longer puzzle ourselves with dark Questions concerning the State, the Condition, and Nature of separate Spirits, or concerning the Body, however to Appearance, lost and destroyed; for the Body and Soul shall once more meet to part no more, but to be happy for ever. In this Case the Learned cannot doubt, and the Ignorant may be sure, that it is the Man, the very Man himself, who shall rise again: for an Union of the same Soul and Body, is as certainly the Restoration of the Man; as the dividing them, was the Destruction. — But to Proof:

In the Scripture we have every Article of this grand and awful Solemnity fully and minutely described to us; insomuch, that if we were to be disappointed in this concluding Scene of our Existence, Christians, (with "Hope in this Life only,") would

ſurely, "of all Men, be the moſt" fooliſh, as well as "miſerable." Accordingly, for our Encouragement herein, and Aſſurance, we have it frequently inculcated, and plainly taught, by poſitive Aſſertion, - by certain Prophecy, - by gracious Promiſe, - by peremptory Threat, and by parabolical Reſemblance in holy Scripture, that, "as it is appointed for Men once to die," ſo, "after that," there is to be "a Judgment." - A Judgment as certain and unavoidable as Death.

St. Paul, from the Reſurrection of our Lord, infers that of our own; and, of Courſe, the Doctrine of a future and general Judgment, as a Conſequence of it. "If Chriſt, (ſays he,) be raiſed from the dead, then is our Reſurrection poſſible." He is the Head, & we the Members of the ſame Body, (the Church.) His Reſurrection, therefore, infers the Poſſibility, the Neceſſity of ours: For, we cannot ſuppoſe the Head to be revived and raiſed from the Dead, without all the Members with it.

"If God raiſed Chriſt from the dead, that he might be the Judge both of Quick and Dead," then it becomes abſolutely neceſſary, that all the Dead ſhould be raiſed, both ſmall and great, whom he is to judge.

Even in the Old Teſtament, (conſiſting almoſt wholly

wholly of temporal Promises,) we find various Intimations given of this by the holy Prophets.

When the People of God were carried away into a strange Land, then, that they might not forget their God, when labouring under sharp and various Calamities, the Prophet Daniel gave a more distinct Account, than any before him, of a future Judgment, and of Recompences laid up for afflicted Virtue: "Many of them that sleep in the Dust, (says he,) shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to everlasting Shame." And,

After him, we find various Prophecies tending to this Purpose, by which the Apprehensions of another World, and the Hopes of heavenly Rewards for temporal Sufferings daily increased; and though the Sadducees, under all that Light, were so stupid as to deny a Resurrection, and Angels, and Spirits, yet the Jewish Nation generally believed both the Resurrection and a future State.

Thus much we learn from the Jewish Dispensation. But, to insist no further on this Point from the Old Testament, let us have Recourse to a few Texts, as Proofs from the New, since "Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel."

St. Jude tells us, in Confirmation hereof, that there was an early Revelation of this to the old

World: "And Enoch also, (the ſeventh from Adam,) propheciedof theſe things; Behold the Lord cometh with ten thouſand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly." But,

This is moſt plainly revealed to us by our Lord and Saviour. The Proceſs of this great Day, with ſeveral of its particular Circumſtances are by him fully deſcribed. Sometimes he conveys the Doctrine of it in figurative, but moſt expreſſive & ſignificant Alluſions: At one Time he compares the World to a Field, and this Judgment as the Harveſt, when the Tares ſhall be ſeparated from the Wheat, (tho' for a While they grow together undiſtinguiſhed, & ſeemingly unregarded,) and each aſſigned its proper Place; "the Wheat into the Garner, but the Tares in unquenchible Fire." Again,

At another Time, the Goſpel-Diſpenſation is compared by him to a "Net, that was caſt into the Sea, & gathered of every Kind, which will be drawn to Shore at the End of the World, and the Angels ſhall come forth, and ſever the Wicked from among the Juſt."

We read it again in the Hiſtory of the Houſe-Holder, who, going a Journey, committed his Affairs to his Servants, and at his Return requires a

ſtrict

ſtrict Account of their reſpective Managements in Truſt, and rewards or puniſhes them impartially according to their Merits. — But,

(And happy it is for us,) We are not left to collect the Proofs of ſo great a Doctrine, from Parabols only; but have it aſſerted to us in the plaineſt and cleareſt Terms.

By frequent Intimations did Chriſt prepare his Diſciples for that full and noble Account of this Circumſtance, with which he indulged them when he was preparing to leave them. He frequently admoniſhes them, that when he comes "in his Glory, he will reward every Man according to his Works;" and that then he will aſſign them ſuitable for whatever they ſhall ſuffer here on Earth on his Account; and at laſt, he delineates to them that Day in ſuch ſtrong and lively Colours, and deſcribes it with ſuch a minute Exactneſs, as to leave thoſe, who willingly would not ſee it, without Excuſe; and even to raiſe, in a lively and active Imagination, a ſtrong Idea of the whole Proceedings of it. Indeed,

The explicit Declarations of this Particular were not, like ſome others, confined to the Diſciples, while the reſt of the People were taught only in Alluſions; for, it was in the Face of a Multitude, and that no ſmall one, that he aſſerted, that "every idle

Word that Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an Account of, in the Day of Judgment."

The Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord, do moſt induſtriouſly follow the Footſteps of their Bleſſed Maſter; &, knowing how eſſential a Point it is, omit no Opportunity of inculcating the Doctrine before us; or rather, indeed, ſome Circumſtances belonging to it, which only were then new: The thing itſelf they ſpeak of with a moſt aſſured Confidence; their Appeals to it are ſuch as declare them not in the leaſt apprehenſive of Oppoſition in that particular Reſpect, and however they labour in Proof of ſome newly revealed Points, (as the Time for Inſtance, and the Director of it,) yet they plainly ſuppoſe the Foundation to be already laid for them, by a general Conſent to the thing itſelf: yet, (as before obſerved,) they omit no Opportunity of eſtabliſhing it: In all their Addreſſes this is ſure to make a Part. It is in a Manner, the firſt Leſſon St. Paul reads to the Athenians; and ſo warmly did he treat of it before Felix, that he made that Governor tremble. But,

To urge no further a Point ſo wholly inſiſted on in the New Teſtament, I ſhall only add that of St. Paul, in another Place, where ſpeaking of the Day of Judgment, he calls it, "the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will

will render to every Man according to his Works."

A future Judgment, then, is certain and unavoidable, and truly to be depended on; and therefore neceſſary to be regarded, and prepared for, being in no Way obſcure on Account of its Diſtance from us, but real and certain, becauſe of the clear Diſcoveries made of it to us.

The Throne hath been already ſeen; - the Judge repreſented ſitting thereon, - the Books opened (*) and "the Dead, both ſmall and great," ſtanding at the Tribunal, that all ſhould take timely warning; - that good Men may hope, - bad Men fear and be awed by it; - and all Men, whether good or bad, be alarmed, ſo as to influence their Lives duly; - to keep their Accounts carefully and even with God; - to ſue out their Pardon beforehand; - to have it in Readineſs againſt the approaching Day, and to improve their Talents according to their reſpective Truſts. (1) What-

(*) It is not poſſible for us to determine how far the Language, in which our Lord deſcribes the Judgment-day, (Mat. xxv. and [illegible]) may be literal, and how far figurative. There ſeems no Reaſon to believe that every individual Word and Action ſhall be particularly examined, or ſtrictly heard; for ſo were this to proceed according to the Methods of Human Courts, it would make the Judgment Millions of Years longer than the whole Period of the World's Duration hath been; unleſs perhaps all thoſe Actions be made to paſs and appear at once. Matt. vii. 22. and xxv. 24, 44. But this may [illegible]

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(1) The Method which Chriſtianity has taken, to convey to us the Evidence of a future State, highly deſerves our Attention.

Had the Goſpel been addreſſed, like a Syſtem of Philoſophy, ſolely to the Underſtanding of Men; - Had it aimed only at enlightning the ſtudious & Reflecting, it would have confined itſelf to *abſtract* Truth; It would have ſimply informed us, that the Righteous are hereafter to be rewarded, and Sinners to be puniſhed. But,

The Goſpel has not ſtoped at barely announcing Life and Immor-

"Whatever Obſcurity, therefore, the Heathens were

tality to Mankind. It was calculated for popular Edification. It was intended to be the Religion not merely of the Few, whoſe Underſtanding was to be informed; but of the Many alſo, whoſe Imagination was to be impreſſed, and whoſe Paſſions were to be awakened, in Order to give the Truth its due Influence over them. Upon this Account, it not only reveals the Certainty of a future State; but, in the Perſon of the great Founder of our Religion, exhibits a Series of Facts relating to it; by Means of which, our Senſes, our Imagination, & Paſſions, all become intereſted in this great Object.

The Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Grave was deſigned to be a ſenſible Evidence, that Death infers not a final Extinction of the living Principle. He roſe, in Order to ſhow, that, in our Name, he had conquered Death, and was become "the Firſt-Fruits of them that ſlept." Nor did he only riſe from the Grave; but by aſcending to Heaven in a viſible Form, before many Witneſſes, gave an ocular Specimen of the Tranſition from this World into the Regions of the Bleſſed. The Employments which now occupy him there, are fully declared. "As our Fore-runner, He hath entered within the Veil." "He appears in the Preſence of God for us." "He maketh perpetual Interceſſion for his People." "I go, (ſaith he,) to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." "In my Father's Houſe are many Manſions." "I go to prepare a Place for you." "I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, there ye may be alſo."

The Circumſtances of his coming again, are diſtinctly fore-told. The ſounding of the laſt Trumpet, - the Reſurrection of the Dead, - the Appearance of the Judge, and the Solemnity with which he ſhall diſcriminate the Good from the Bad, are all deſcribed. The very Words in which he will pronounce the final Sentence, are recited in our hearing: [viz] "Come, Ye Bleſſed of my Father! Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World." Then ſhall the Holy and the Juſt "be caught up in the Clouds, to meet the Lord

were left in, from their own Reasoning on this most important of all Subjects; or imperfectly it was shadowed to the Jews, under the Law: We Christians have infinite Cause to be thankful, who are favoured in the Gospel with the fullest and strongest Attestation to this most interesting of all Concerns. Christians, unless they renounce their Christianity, cannot disbelieve a future Judgment.

Thus strong are the Arguments in Favour of a Judgment to come. But, if unhappily, all our Arguments be ineffectual, if still there be found some Minds too dull to discern, or too disputatious to admit their Validity; we have yet in Reserve one Method by which every Person, let his Capacity or Turn of Mind be what it will, may bring himself infallibly

Lord in the Air." They shall enter with him into "the City of the living God." They shall possess "the New Earth and the New Heavens, wherein dwelleth Righteousness." "God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes." "They shall behold his Face in Righteousness, and be satisfied with his Likeness forever." "In whose Presence there is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right Hand there are Pleasures forevermore."

By recording such a Train of striking Circumstances & Facts, the Gospel familiarizes us, in some Measure, with a future State. By accommodating this great Discovery, in so useful a Manner, to the Conceptions of Men, it furnishes a strong intrinsick Evidence of its divine Origin; and leaves it without Doubt or Scruple.

fallibly to the full Belief of this great Article of our Religion: - It is This, Let him be a GOOD Man. Let him do what he knows in his Conſcience to be his Duty, whether any one will bring him to Account for the Diſcharge of it, or not: Let him learn not to fear the Inſpection of an heavenly Eye: Let him be juſt ſuch a Perſon as he ought to be, if it were certain he ſhould be called to Judgment; and we may venture to pronounce that his Scruples will ſoon vaniſh. "If any Man will do God's Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God." (1) This

(1) When the Principle of a true and rational Piety has taken Poſſeſſion of the Heart, Error in religious Matters, eſpecially ſuch as carries Men to the Lengths of Schiſm, Hereſy and Infidelity, will not ordinarily find Admittance. A Man of this Frame of Mind proceeds in his Inquiries with Calmneſs and Sedateneſs, with Impartiality & Freedom from Prejudice, with Modeſty and Humility. His Underſtanding is well prepared for perceiving the Evidences of Religion, or of any fundamental Article of it; and his Will has no Reluctance or Objection to admit them. If, in his Progreſs, he finds, (as even a ſincere Inquirer may find.) "ſome things hard to be underſtood," he will not preſently give up what is plain and evident, for the Sake of what as yet may ſeem ſomewhat doubtful or difficult. Difficulties, he conſiders, muſt, from the Nature of things, (as in the Nature of God, & the Glories of Heaven, &c. which are above our Comprehenſion,) attend our Religion, ſuppoſing it true; & theſe, therefore, he will, by no Means, admit as Proofs that it is not ſo. He will, however, examine, according to his Abilities, whether the Difficulties he meets with, may not be ſurmounted by Patience and Attention; and where his own Abilities

This Method will help him greatly to see the Force
of his Mind, he will not refuse to call in other proper Assistances; pe-
culiarly those of Persons, whom he has Cause to presume, & is willing
to believe, wiser than himself; and their's most especially, who are, by
God's own Appointment, set apart for this Purpose. — The Truth is,
It is from *Half-Thinking*, not *Free-Thinking*, that dangerous Errors
& Infidelity commonly arise; and again, such Half-Thinking is gene-
rally occasioned by the Want of an hearty Desire to know and to do
the Will of God — Where the Heart is not animated by the Love of
God, the Man will probably exert just Thought enough, (and a very
little Thought will be sufficient,) to raise a few Doubts about our holy
Religion, without further troubling himself to pursue them to any ra-
tional Conclusion, or vouchsafing to seek for any Solution of them from
others: or, it may be, he has been far enough from Home to have seen
much Hypocrisy or much Bigotry under the Profession of Christianity,
and he will not be persuaded, but that every Appearance of it is fairly
resolvable into One or Other of these Principles: Indeed, if Vanity or
vicious Prejudice strongly predominate in his Constitution, he may
perhaps be at the Pains of working up such Difficulties or such Abuses
in Religion into formidable Objections against it. But, where sincere
Piety and a sound Mind happily unite in conducting the important In-
quiry, the Case is far otherwise: the Arguments in Favour of every
divine Constitution will have their due Weight, and those against it no
more than their due Weight: and then, we need neither be "ashamed
of the Gospel of Christ," nor afraid least it should fail of approving it-
self to such an Inquirer, as being "the Power of God, & the Wisdom
of God;" however its Doctrines may, to the superficial or the conceited
Thinker, be a Stumbling Block; and its Precepts, to the vicious and
corrupt Liver, Foolishness. — And,

As this is generally found true of Misconceptions in Matters of
Faith, so it is no less applicable to Errors of a moral Nature, or such as
more immediately relate to the Conduct of Life. A sincere Resolution
to act agreeably to the Law of God, is ordinarily one of the most faith-

Force of Arguments; and make him wiſer than the Aged, becauſe he keeps the Commandments. It will do more towards the Confirmation of his Belief, than the moſt perſevering Study of Philoſophy, or even of the Holy Scriptures: and it will, beſides, do That for him which Belief alone cannot do: it will ſave him. It will exceed the Knowledge of Miſteries, or Gift of Tongues, or Power of working Miracles. It will place him before the Preſence of his Judge "with exceeding Joy;" and thro the Mercy of

ful Interpreters of it. It holds good in Relation to Practice, as well as Belief, that "if any Man will do God's Will," or is ready and deſirous to do it, he ſhall know of the Action or Undertaking, "whether it be of God or not." He, who has the Authority of God always uppermoſt upon his Mind, & who reſolves, at all Hazards, to ſubmit his Actions to it, uſually finds his Duty lying plain enough before him. — Miſtakes about Practice generally ariſe from ſome perverſe Inclination, ſome impetuous Deſire, or "carnal Affection not ſubject to the Law of God." Theſe firſt make Men deliberate about Queſtions, which, to an honeſt and good Heart, would have been no Queſtions at all; and then hurry them on to a Determination of the affected Debate agreeably to the Strength, not of Evidence in the thing, but of Inclination in themſelves. Hence "the Way of the Wicked is ſaid to be as Darkneſs," and they are repreſented as "groping in the Dark at Noon-Day;" they perplex themſelves in the cleareſt Caſes; and, no Wonder; ſince, in this Senſe alſo, "they love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their" Intentions and Deſires "are evil. — On the contrary, the upright Man ſees his Duty clearly, becauſe he is willing to perform it conſcientiouſly: - "The Path of the Juſt is as the ſhining Light, which ſhineth more and more unto a perfect Day."

of Almighty God, the Grace of his Spirit, and the Mediation of his Son, secure to him the Possession of that Bliss which others indeed of greater Ingenuity or Eloquence, might prove with more Exactness, or preach with more Power; but which the Good alone have the Wisdom to obtain.

And, — In the due influencing us hereto, the Scripture hath given us the best Help which is possible to be given, by its affecting Accounts of the several Particulars that relate to this awful Transaction [viz] the Persons on whom, - the Person by whom, - the Things for which, - and the Manner in which, the final Sentence of Happiness or Misery is to be pronounced.

The Persons who are to be judged are ALL MEN "For, we must ALL appear."

The Judgment of God will be UNIVERSAL; for He will judge the WORLD; - Persons of all Places, Times, Characters, and Qualities; Sexes, Ages, and Conditions; "all Nations, Languages & Tongues," without Exemption or Excuse, "must appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ;" for all Men will be liable to it; no Man that ever lived in the World, (except our blessed Saviour, the Judge himself,) will be exempted from it; for, "we must ALL appear

before the Judgment-Seat of Christ." This I shall endeavour to confirm, First,

From natural Light, or Reason; And then,

Secondly, From holy Writ, or divine Revelation.

That the future Judgment will be universal is evident, whether we consider God, or Ourselves.

If we consider God, doth not Reason tell us that he is impartially just, and that he is no Accepter of Persons. Now,

Justice requires that every one should have That which of due belongs to him; and of due it belongs to every Man to give an Account of himself, and of his Actions to the great Judge of the World.

To exempt any from this Account would be Partiality in God, which the Scripture doth every where remove at the greatest Distance from Him.

If we consider Ourselves, this will be equally apparent: For, are we not all God's Creatures? and as such, are we not all subject to his Laws and Dominion? are we not all under his Authority, as our Law-Giver, & liable & accountable to him, as our Judge?

Whoever, therefore, pretends to exempt himself from the Judgment of God, must first exempt himself out of the Creation, & "deny the God that made him." — But,

Atheism

Atheism and Infidelity will avail no Man in the Day of the Lord; No Man's Disbelief will alter the Reality of things: For, "what Man is he that liveth," who HATH lived of himself? "Hath not one God created us?" and "are we not all the Sons of the Most High?"

The Apostle, therefore, concludes all the World as liable to the Judgment of God, because, by the Benefit of Creation, they are all equally subject to the Laws of his Dominion.

"We must all, then, appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ;" (i.e.) no Person whatever, of what Condition soever, will be exempted from appearing before him. But this will be further confirmed,

Secondly, From Holy Writ, or divine Revelation, which abundantly evinces the same. For,

We find that Scripture useth Words of the greatest Latitude and Extent to express this Matter more fully and emphatically to us.

In Genesis, God is called "The Judge of the EARTH:" "Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?"

It is said, that "when Christ shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory, all NATIONS shall be gathered before him:" He being expressly affirmed to us, in the sacred Scripture, as solemnly "ordained of

God, to be the Judge both of QUICK & DEAD." (1)

But, to express this the more fully, and that the last Judgment will be universal, the Scripture reckons up the several Ranks and Conditions of Men, to show that none shall be exempted.

If any be exempted, they must either be secured by their Power or Interest, or over-looked by their Meanness: But none will be either privileged or neglected; for, "both High and Low must appear before him:" For, "with God there is no Respect of Persons."

If any can pretend to be privileged, it must be those of the greatest Dignity and Authority, "The Kings of the Earth;" - or those of the greatest Esteem, "The Rich Men of the World;" - or those of the greatest Power and Strength, as "Chief Captains and Mighty Men;" but these have no Protection against the Arrest of that Day. (2) Nor

(1) That is, The Living and the Dead. All that have died before, in every Age of the World, will be restored to Life; & all that remain alive then will be joined with them, to receive their Doom; nor will any Exception be made.

(2) Earthly Grandeur is so far from being a Plea of Exemption from Judgment, that it is one of the strongest Arguments in Proof of it; for it sets those who enjoy it beyond the Reach of human Justice; and the Use they make of that Privilege is too often such as cannot be attended with Impunity always, without manifest Violence done to the Divine Attributes.

That

Nor shall any be ever looked for their Meanness. — If any Sort of Men be contemptible, on Account of their Indigence; it must be those who are in the lowest Degree of Debasement, Bond-Men and Slaves; but "every Bond-Man, and every Free-Man," will be brought before this Tribunal. (1) "I saw the Dead, (saith St. John,) both Small and Great standing before God; and the Books were opened, & the Dead

That Servant who received *ten Talents*, was as accountable to his Lord for his Management of them, as he who received but *one*; and all the Difference between them, was, that the First had ten Times as much to answer for, as the Latter: and if he had not improved them, would have been as proportionably punished. — It was only the different Use of their several Talents that occasioned the different Sentence.

How airy, then, are the Great Men's Hopes of Partiality in that impartial Court, where Virtue will be the only true Stamp of Nobility; & Behaviour, not Titles, will determine the Reception.

(1) He, who, (in the Parable,) was least intrusted, had yet *one* Talent; nor is there any Station but what enables, indeed, obliges Men to merit either Good or Ill in an equitable Proportion. It is a Crime even to do Nothing: He who received but *one Talent*, will not indeed be liable to give Account for more than he received; But, as his Task was but proportionate to his Abilities, so if he cannot give a good Account of That, he must expect the same Fate which would have befallen the others, who received ten or five Talents, had they been found faulty, [viz] to be "cast into outer Darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth." Indeed, our Lord, perhaps, purposedly particularized the Defect in this Instance, and the Punishment, to obviate a Presumption but too common in the World, [viz] that *small Advantages* may be lightly regarded. But here we see the Neglect, and the Consequence of it. Serm. LXXXV.

"Dead were judged out of those things which were written therein; & the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it, & Death & the Grave gave up the Dead which were in them; & they were judged every Man according to his Works."

Here we find the whole World delivering up the several Bodies deposited in it, Sea & Land, that none may escape this Judgment.

"We must all, then, appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ; no Person whatever, of what Condition soever, will be exempted from appearing before him: the Highest shall not escape by his Power; nor the Richest, by his Wealth; nor the Wisest, by his Wisdom: nor, on the other Hand, will the Meanest amongst us be looked on as too inconsiderable for God's Notice; or the most ignorant be exempted from answering for the Care, which he hath taken, to get the Knowledge that he might, and to use the Knowledge he had, of his Duty. Whatever our Station be, we are bound alike to behave in it, as well as we can; and how far we have done so, and how far we have failed of it, will be the one Inquiry that our Judge will make. — Other Distinctions, how considerable soever they appear in our Eyes, to Him are as nothing. All Creatures are equally beneath his infinite Majesty; but none are beneath or above

above his Inspection now, or his Sentence hereafter, "for He who is Lord of all, shall fear no Man's Person, neither shall he stand in Awe of any Man's Greatness; for He hath made the small and great, and careth for all alike."

"Say not thou, I will hide myself from the Lord; "shall any remember me from above? I shall not be "remembered among so many People: for what is "my Soul among such an infinite Number of Crea-"tures? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of "Heavens, the Deep, and the Earth, and all that "therein is, shall be moved when He shall visit. "The Mountains also, & Foundations of the Earth "shall be shaken with Trembling when the Lord "looketh upon them. No Heart can think upon "these things; & who is able to conceive his Ways?"

Here, then, we are put, every one of us, on a fair Trial, without any Disadvantage or Inequality whatever. Both the most honourable, and the most contemptible Persons, as to worldly Circumstances, may be either the happiest, or the most miserable in the next Life, just as they shall chuse. Let those of the highest Degree, therefore, be humble, and those of low Estate be content, and all be watchful over themselves. — But,

III. I am to consider the Person who is to be our Judge, [viz.) Christ: "We must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ." (1)

Though this be a Discovery which is but coæval with the Gospel, and then first effected when "Life and Immortality were brought to Light;" yet there are some Considerations deducible even from Reason, which, without positive Evidence, might almost improve a Hint of such a thing, to Satisfaction & Conviction. For,

As it is necessary that this Judge be vested with Omniscience, or an all-discerning Power, in Order to render him a perfect Master of the Causes He is then to try; - as he must be strictly equal and impartial, and of Skill sufficient to join boundless Mercy with infinite Justice; - as he must also be of Power sufficient to make-good the Awards of his Judgment, and to carry it into Execution, which is, doubtless,

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(1) The *Light of Nature* teaches us, that God will judge the World; but *Revelation* has declared to us, that he will judge it *by Christ*. The Difference of the Person judging, makes not indeed any Difference in the *Rule* by which we shall be judged. But it is a Signification of God's merciful Intentions towards Mankind, that he has Appointed the *same* Person to be our Judge, who condescended to take our Nature upon him, to be made subject to all our Weaknesses and Infirmities, and to be tempted in all things like as We are, Sin only excepted; Who therefore "can have Compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the Way, for that he himself also was compassed with Infirmity."

all of superior to any thing less than Omnipotence. As these are cogent Reasons, why our Judge should not be less than God; so there are, on the other hand, forcible Considerations to persuade us, that he ought to be Man — For, besides that it seems necessary to the Solemnity of that awful Court, that it should be under the Direction of a visible Judge, which can hardly be said of that Being, who is most emphatically styled "the INVISIBLE King," it is further requisite to convince the Prisoners of the great Tenderness and Compassion with which that Judgment will be conducted, that it be committed to One, who is a Man like ourselves.

Tho' God, by Right of Creation, is both Judge and Governor of the World, yet He hath translated this Right to his Son, our blessed Redeemer. "The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son."

I shall not multiply Texts to this Purpose, tho' there are many which speak the same Sense, because this Doctrine is of general Belief among Christians, being Part of the Creed which they daily rehearse.

God by this hath greatly honoured his Son, and also manifested exceeding Kindness and Good-Will to Men.

If we conſider the ſeveral Offices to which Chriſt was anointed, we ſhall ſee that, as in Quality of PROPHET, he was to inſtruct and teach us; and PRIEST, to atone and intercede for us; ſo, as KING, is he to diſpoſe of, & govern us. Now, Judgement is an inſeparable Right of the regal Office: an earthly Monarch for many Reaſons is oblidged to commit this Part of his Function into the Hands of Subſtitutes, yet is ſtill the true and real Judge: for each of theſe Subſtitutes is but his Repreſentative, and, as it were, King for the Time being. This Neceſſity of acting by Proxy in them, is founded on the Difficulty of an earthly King's being able to qualify himſelf to execute that Part of his Office with Equity and Impartiality; the Impoſſibility of his being every where preſent; & the great Improbability that any One in THAT Station, ſhould take upon him ſo much Trouble. But, none of theſe Difficulties occur, with Reſpect to Chriſt; for he is more capable of this Matter, than any Subſtitute we can think of; and can extend his Influence at once over the whole Face of Nature with greater Eaſe, than we can command the Tranſactions of but the ſmalleſt Diſtance. But further,

We are not only the Subjects of this King, but moſt truly his Slaves, Vaſſals, and Creatures; - His

Creatures

Creatures for, "by Him all things were made:" His Slaves; for, after our moſt ſhameful Revolt, He bought us again, at no leſs a Price, than his own moſt precious Blood. So that, not to receive Chriſt in this Character as our Judge, is to fall under the heavy Cenſure of the Apoſtle, of "denying the Lord that bought us."

From the REGAL Character, conjoined with the PROPHETICK, reſults a third, [viz] that of LEGISLATOR. The Laws and Ordinances, to which we are ſubject as Chriſtians, are founded on the Will of Chriſt; the Injunctions and Prohibitions are of his ordaining; the Rewards and Puniſhments of his denouncing; & "the Words that He ſpake, the ſame ſhall judge us at the laſt Day."

A Prince, who is but the Guardian of an ancient Eſtabliſhment, has the beſt Right to reward or puniſh the Violation, or Obſervance of it; but while the Founder of that Eſtabliſhment ſurvived, He, if he were properly authorized to make it, had the ſtrongeſt Claim to try the Breaches of it, as being the beſt Interpreter of his own Ordinances. As Chriſt therefore, the Founder of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, liveth forever, the ſame Arguments which prove his original Right of conſtituting the Laws of Chriſtianity, prove alſo his Claim to maintain and vindi-

cate them. On these Foundations, with the additional Consideration, how greatly due such an Exaltation is to his former Sufferings, do we ground the absolute Propriety of Christ's coming to judge us. For the Honour hereby is great, in that He who was despised and rejected by the World, slandered as a Glutton and Wine-Bibber, and traduced and reviled as a wicked Impostor, blasphemed as an Agent for Devils, and at last accused, condemned and executed, as the worst of Malefactors, shall return again in great Glory, coming in the Clouds, with ten thousand of his Saints and Angels, to execute Judgment upon the SAME World that had so maliciously treated him; and "to convince the ungodly among them, of all the wicked Deeds which they have committed, and of their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him."

This, surely, will abundantly redound to his Honour and Glory, and remunerate for his former Infirmity. Christ himself speaks of This, as if God, committed this Power to him with a Design to confer an Honour upon him: "The Father (saith he,) judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son, that all Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." But further,

God, by giving this Honour to his Son, hath also by

by it equally manifested forth his exceeding Kindness and "Good-Will towards Men;" and hath given us the most signal Demonstration of his tender Regard for our Welfare, in referring the final Decision of our Cause to the Cognizance of Christ, who is our best and truest Friend, and who is in no Way disaffected, nor indifferently affected towards us, but wishes us well, & hath expressed an Excess of Kindness in doing us Good.

"It is, undoubtedly, a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God:" For Man, whose greatest Purity is Filth and Vileness, to come under the Censure of that most holy and all-perfect Being, whose Nature holds the most direct Contrariety to Sin and Wickedness; this must fill us with Terror and Confusion, without any Mixture of Complacency and Hope; must sink us under a Weight, from which we are happily relieved, by finding our Cause committed to a Judge, who having experienced, tho not all the Infirmities of our Nature, yet all the Temptations to which it is exposed, must be supposed most likely to extend the greatest Indulgence to them. To have such a Judge, therefore, as both knows our Infirmities, and how far they may be allowed for, must convince us, at once, of the Tenderness, and the Equity of that Judgment.

So that, had it been left to us, Self-Interest, from our own Choice, would have made him Judge over us; by which the Terror of the Solemnity is mercifully tempered & allayed, our Expectation made easy, and our Preparation for it encouraged. For,

Christ, having assumed and been liable to all the Infirmities of our Nature, (Sin only excepted,) is therefore sensible of all the Frailties, the Errors and manifold Temptations to which we are daily exposed; and will therefore make a merciful & gracious Allowance for them; for he hath felt our Weakness, and will pity it. But, on the other Hand,

As nothing eases the Minds of true Christians more than to have such a Friend for their Judge, who loved them even to Death, & gave his Life for them; so nothing will more heighten the Terrors of the Wicked than for Christ to judge them; who, as he knows our Infirmities, is also well acquainted with our Strength thro his powerful Assistance, and will therefore "render Judgment without Mercy to those who have sinned in Despight of Mercy."

What, then, can more effectually declare the Equity of this Procedure, and that it will be administered in Righteousness, than that God hath ordained "a Man like ourselves," to sit in Judgment over us?

In

In human Judgments it is reckoned the Summit of Equity for Men to be tryed by their PEERS, to be acquitted or condemned by thoſe who are as near as may be to them; becauſe ſuch are moſt likely to underſtand their Caſe beſt, and to have a fair and equitable Conſideration of all the Circumſtances belonging to it. — Now Chriſt, as he is "the Son of Man," is near to us, "Bone of our Bone, & Fleſh of our Fleſh," - "made in all things like unto us," "only without Sin;" He dwelt among us, & therefore underſtands all our Circumſtances, and whatever may have Influence in our Caſe, either to leſſen or aggravate our Guilt. — What the Apoſtle to the Hebrews ſays of Chriſt, as a High-Prieſt, may be equally applied to him as Judge: "We have not a Judge which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin."

What is there, then, more fitting than that This Perſon ſhould be honoured by God to ſit in Judgment upon the World, and to condemn thoſe, who, after all the Means that have been offered for their Recovery and Salvation, would not repent and be ſaved; And, (on the other Hand,) that he ſhould "give Life to as many as he pleaſed," (i.e) to as many as pleaſed him? — It was a fit Reward for

what he had done and ſuffered, to take thoſe into Favour again, for whom he had intereſted himſelf with ſuch inexpreſſible Goodneſs. In a Word,

Chriſt alone is capacitated for this Judicature, being qualified both for its Diſcharge and Honour; having a ſupreme Authority, which none can queſtion or appeal from; - an infinite Underſtanding, to ſearch and diſtinguiſh; - an incomparable Integrity, which no Intereſt or Affection can biaſs; and an almighty Power, to reward and puniſh; - and beſides whom, there is none other fit to ſit as Judge of Princes and Potentates, of Men and Angels, except He, who made and governs them, "who is over all" in Power, & next in Dignity to the Father, even the Son of God himſelf, "to whom, therefore, all Judgment is committed."

It might, perhaps, have been more ſuitable to the awful Solemnity of the Laſt-Day, and to the Dignity and Glory in which Chriſt will then appear, if He had been deſcribed in the Character of a Judge, as "the Son of God," - "the Brightneſs of his Glory, & the expreſs Image of his Perſon;" or in thoſe other magnificent Terms in which he is ſo often ſpoken of in the prophetical Writings. But ſtill,

It is more ſuitable, for the Reaſons already given, that when He ſpeaks of coming to judge the World, He

He should rather give us an Idea of his Human, than his Divine Nature. For, it would be impossible for the best Man living, without Fear and Trembling, to consider, that he must one Day stand in Judgment before a just, omniscient, and all-powerful God, in Order to be sentenced to an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, according to the Good or Evil he hath done in this Life: But, if any thing can allay the Terror of such a Consideration, it must be this, that our Judge is the Saviour of the World, "the one Mediator between God & Man, the Man Christ Jesus"

How happy is it for us to have a Judge, I had almost said so PARTIAL, but surely I may well say so FAVOURABLE, to us, that he was content to be himself the Sacrifice to redeem us from the Punishment due to our Sins? - When we consider ourselves, (on the one Hand,) how wretched & weak we are, how constantly doing Wrong, either wilfully or ignorantly, & (on the other Hand,) contemplate the infinite Majesty, and Holiness, and Justice of God, what Account can we hope to give of ourselves to him, "who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity?" - But see, - God hath withdrawn his Terrors, and has given a Man to be the Judge of Men. Indeed,

It is observable, that our Lord himself assigns his

taking human Nature and the Infirmities of it upon him as the very Reaſon why God hath conſtituted him Judge of the World: "The Father, (ſaith he,) hath given him Authority to execute Judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of Man." Accordingly we find, that when He more particularly deſcribes the ſolemn and awful Proceſs of the laſt Judgment, tho he ſpeaks of it in very high and lofty Terms, and repreſents himſelf ſurrounded with Myriads of Angels, and ſitting upon the Throne of his Glory; yet ſo moderate that Dread and Aſtoniſhment which would ariſe in the Minds of his moſt faithful Servants from a Senſe of his divine Preſence and Majeſty, He is pleaſed, even in the Midſt of his Triumphs, and the glorious Appearances in which his Divinity will THEN ſhine-forth, to ſtile himſelf "the SON OF MAN." — It is for the ſame Reaſon that the Apoſtle, (when ſpeaking by the Direction of the Holy Spirit of God concerning the laſt Judgment,) tells us, it will be executed "by that Man, whom he hath ordained." Indeed,

Chriſt ſcarce ever ſpake of a future Judgment, without inſiſting upon this Circumſtance; if he treats of it in plain and open Terms, he as plainly declares himſelf the Judge; if parabolically, and in Alluſions, he is the Houſeholder, who calls his

Servants

Servants to Account how they have employed the ſeveral Talents he entruſted them with; and the King, who "taketh Vengence on thoſe his Enemies, who would not that he ſhould reign over them;" when the World is the Field, himſelf is the Director of the Harveſt, and the Angels are the Reapers.

When he was upon the Point of leaving the World, he took eſpecial Care, that this Doctrine ſhould be perpetuated, and among other neceſſary Inſtructions, expreſly commanded his Diſciples "to preach it unto the People, and to teſtify that, it was He who was ordained of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead."

This Command they moſt faithfully and religiouſly obeyed, and whether abſent or preſent, whether by oral or epiſtolary Inſtruction, whether their Aim were to gain a Proſelyte, or to confirm and edify thoſe who were already converted, as well as in their MILK, as in their STRONG MEAT, this was ſure to make a Part; witneſs that Cloud of Witneſſes, of which there is hardly a Page of their Writings but can furniſh one. St. Paul, indeed, looked upon the Reſurrection of Chriſt, as a ſufficient Proof of his Deſtination to this Office; and, (fully conſidered,) it undoubtedly is ſo; being a moſt ſolemn Inauguration to his REGAL Office, of which the Right of

Judgment is an inſeparable Appendage; being an irrefragible Proof of his complete Qualification for that Office, and a ſatisfactory Seal to the Truth of all his former Poſitions, of which this was one, not the leaſt to be inſiſted on, God certainly "gave Aſſurance unto all Men" of his Intent to "judge the World" by him, "in that He raiſed him from the Dead."

"We muſt all appear, then, before the Judgement-ſeat of Chriſt." There is a Day coming in which "the Son of God, in like Manner as he aſcended into Heaven, ſo ſhall he alſo deſcend," and ſit in Judgment upon the World; at whoſe Tribunal we muſt all appear, and ſtand to be judged before him; "with whom there will be no Reſpect of Perſons," but "every Man will be judged according to his Works."

Thus we ſee how this great and fundamental Article of Religion, involved in Darkneſs in former Ages, is made plain and ſenſible to Mankind by the Light of the Goſpel.

That Men were accountable, they always knew; that there would be a future Judgment was generally believed; but how Men were to appear in Judgement, or how mere unbodied Spirits were to be

be judged, - how rewarded, - or how punished, they knew not. That the Right of judging Men was in God, was well known; but how he would exercise it, whether by himself, or by another; visibly, or invisibly, they knew not. Infinite were the Disputes upon this Subject: Instead of which the Gospel has given us a plain and sensible Representation, assuring us that at the Judgment we shall be, what we now are, Men, real Men; and that the Man, Christ Jesus, who once appeared in the World to redeem us, will appear again to judge us by that very Gospel, and those very Rules, which he hath left us to govern and conduct ourselves by.

Seeing, then, these things what exceeding great and powerful Obligations do we all lie under to live according to them, in all Holiness and Godliness of Obedience, that in the Great Day we may be able to give up our Accounts with Joy, & so, (having the Sentence, not of Death, but of Life, passed upon us,) we may enter into the Inheritance of our Lord, "in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-Hand are Pleasures for evermore."

SERMON LXXXVI.

The End and Effect of the future Judgment.

2 Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the "Judgment-seat of ~~of~~ Christ, that every one "may receive the things done in the Body."

The Mind of Man, fallen and polluted as he is, seems yet to be carried, by a natural Impulse, to the Desire of future, as well as present Happiness.

Whenever he reflects, he finds in himself a Consciousness of his own Immortality, and a Concern for his Allotment in that Eternity which is to succeed this Life. And, as it is One of the first Conclusions of natural Reason that all his Happiness or Misery must depend on the Favour or Displeasure of that Supreme Being who made and governs the

World

World; ſo his Conſcience is perpetually reminding him to ſecure an Intereſt in the Favour of God by ſuch Actions as are agreeable to his Will; and to prevent his Diſpleaſure by avoiding ſuch things as are offenſive to him. But ſtill,

The ſtrong Propenſity of our Nature to Evil, and the near & tempting Satisfactions with which Vice ſollicits us, incline us frequently to liſten to every Expedient that may reconcile our Duty with theſe Gratifications, and ſecure to us the preſent Intereſts and Pleaſures of Vice, without a Forfeiture of the Rewards of Virtue.

This is that dangerous Deluſion which the Apoſtle (in the Words before us) endeavours to obviate; aſſuring us that the Day will come, when every Moment of our Lives will be recognized by God, & be pronounced upon for all Eternity: and that none of our frivolous Excuſes will divert his Judgment in that Day, when "we muſt all appear before him, that every one may receive the things done in the Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good, or bad." — This is the Point I am am now to conſider: — The Effects of the future Judgment, and the Proceedings at that Time.

The Proceedings of that Day will be to inquire into all the Actions of the Sons of Men, and to reward them accordingly. And Firſt,

First, The Proceeding of that Day will be to inquire into all the Actions of the Sons of Men.

No Action, however open or ſecret, good or bad, will eſcape the then Inquiry, for, "every Man will be judged according to his Works."

Reaſon has in all Ages foretold, that the Creator of Mankind would demand an Account of the Uſe which his Creatures had made of the Powers with which He had endued them; but though the wiſeſt ever agreed that ſuch a Scrutiny would be made, yet a Doubt remained who would come the cleareſt off in ſuch a Tryal; in what Manner they muſt live to obtain a Diſcharge at that Time. — Now,

The Almighty has by Revelation confirmed the Opinion of Mankind, and moreover acquainted us that He will bring every ſecret thing into Judgment; and alſo has made known to us what will acquit, and what will condemn us in his Sight.

One of the greateſt Inſtances of the Goodneſs of God therefore to us, is, the affording us all neceſſary Knowledge, and acquainting us, in the plaineſt Manner, what we are to hope and fear, and what to build our Hopes and Fears upon.

He might have revealed to us that He would judge us, and left us ignorant about what the In-

quiry would be, or how far it would extend; or, we might have been left to our own Judgment to determine what Rules to guide our Conduct by, in Order to our being acquitted: But, by the Goodneſs of God, every Degree of Ignorance is now taken away, and the whole of our Being is laid open before us in Order to our taking-in at one View, PAST, PRESENT, and TO COME. We have certain Rules laid down for our Conduct, which enable us to paſs that Judgment on our PAST Actions which our Creator himſelf would do; the PRESENT we know how to improve in Order to our final Acquittance; and the FUTURE we can look into, and hope for, or fear, according as we make-uſe of, or neglect the Advantages offered us in the Goſpel. — But,

As thoſe who believe a general Judgment, do alſo acknowledge that the OPEN Acts of Men will be judged at the great Aſſize; I ſhall, therefore, more immediately apply myſelf to convince them, that ſuch Acts alſo will be made Articles of Inquiry as they are moſt apt to imagine will eſcape Cenſure;

Such are the Ambitious Man's imaginary Scenes of Honour and Glory, formed and wrought up to a Kind of Life in a mere Deluſion of Thought; which, fantaſtical as they are in themſelves, do ariſe from real Pride and Vanity:

Such

Such the visionary Enjoyment of sensual Men, when the Thoughts traverse all the forbidden Paths of Luxury and Wantonness; where, tho the Phantom be airy & bodiless, yet does this Dream of Sensuality derive itself from no imaginary Corruption, but from a real Distemper in the Mind, from inordinate Desires and Affections:

Such is the secret Anger, such the Malice of the Heart, which sits brooding over envious or revengeful Designs, which it contrives within itself, and seems to execute upon its Enemies; and, for Want of Power or Opportunity for real Revenge, feeds itself with viewing the Execution of its Wrath, tho' only expressed in the Images of Fancy. — Harmless and innocent as this Revenge may seem, which spends itself in imaginary Mischief only, yet it springs from the Root of Bitterness, and is too plain an Evidence that we hate one another:

Such particularly are the secret Sins of Men, and all inward Complacency and Liking to Sin:

Such particularly are all Neglects and Omissions of our Duty, and Disuse of Talents received; the which Men do but too easily set-by, as though they were in no Way hereafter to account for them. But for these, and all others of like Nature, we must as assuredly and as strictly account for, tho' forgotten

by us, as we shall for any open and more publick Violations of our Duty. (1) For,

The general Judgment, at the Last Day, will not rest in overt, (i.e) in open and publick Acts only, but

(1) That *secret* Sins will be accounted for hereafter, is evident from hence, because oftentimes they are the most heinous, as *habitual Sins*, which, as we are too well acquainted with them, so we take but little Notice of them: But, will this plead their Excuse? Shall only fearful Sinners & modest Beginners be punished? and shall the Height of Iniquity, because it takes away all Shame and Sense of Sin, take away likewise all Danger of Judgment; This can agree with no Rule of Justice or Equity; for by this Means, the same Man will stand chargeable with the Guilt of his early Sins, such as he committed before his Conscience was quite hardened, and yet not accountable for the more enormous Crimes of sinful Wickedness: as if the only Sin we could commit, were to be sensible of our Faults.

The same might be made apparent also in other Instances; for every idle Word, how soon soever it slips out of our Memory, for every vain Imagination of the Heart, how soon soever it vanishes away, we shall "give an Account of in the Day of Judgment:" For the Guilt of Sin does not arise from the Power of our Memory, nor is it extinguished by the Weakness of it; if it were, Forgetfulness would be the surest Repentance; and Want of Thought and Reflection, which is so often represented in Scripture as an Aggravation of Sin, would be the Sinner's best Security But alas! Tho' we forget, there is One who cannot, before whom our Iniquities are ever present; and who will enter into Judgment with us, as well for the Sins which we cannot, or do not duly remember, as for those we cannot forget; and will also charge our Unmindfulness of them into the Account: for not only the Wicked, but those also who forget God and their Duty, and of Course are regardless of their Sins, will be brought to Account. "The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the People that forget God."

but will alſo reach to thoſe which lie here moſt concealed; even to the Thoughts and Intentions of our Hearts. And;

That thus we ſhall be dealt with, the Scripture is expreſs: "God will bring every Work into Judgement, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil:" And St. Paul, beſides the Place now under Conſideration, hath another to the Romans, where, ſpeaking of the Day of Judgment, he ſtiles it, "The Day, when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt."

In the Day of Judgment we ſhall have to do with One, "before whom all things are naked & open;" and who is a Diſcerner of Thoughts, a Searcher of Hearts, and an Underſtander of our very Imaginations; and who, therefore, in that Day, "will bring to Light the hidden things of Darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the Councils of the Heart," ſo that "every Man will then receive from him the due & juſt Reward of his Deeds."

Herein, therefore, conſiſts the perfect Righteouſneſs of God's Judgment, that no one Innocent will ſuffer, and that no one Guilty will be there diſcharged; no Evaſion will be left for the cloſeſt and moſt cunning Device; nor Recompence loſt to the moſt obſcure & unobſerved Virtue; for, "God will render to every

Man according to his Works." — Accordingly,

The holy evangelical Prophet, in the Revelations, acquaints us, that all the Actions of Men are recorded in Books, which will be produced and "opened at the great Day, and the Dead, both ſmall & great, will be judged out of thoſe things which are written therein." (1)

Our moſt ſecret Thoughts and Actions, then, as well as our open and public Deeds, will be brought into ſtrict Account, and we ſhall be anſwerable for them: "for, there is nothing ſo ſecret which ſhall not be revealed, nor hid that ſhall not be made manifeſt" in that great Day of the Lord, and Revelation of the Lives of Men.

Some are apt to think themſelves ſafe, if they can but eſcape the Eyes of Men, and commit their Sins in Secret, in Darkneſs, and in the Night. But, This is either direct Atheiſm, or downright Folly, becauſe the Eye of God is always upon us, and "the Darkneſs intercepteth him not, but the Night is as clear as the Day; - the Day and Night are to Him both alike."

If, therefore, we be always under the Inſpection of our Judge, - If all we think, and ſpeak, and do, "be under

(1) *Quicquid ſub Terrâ eſt, in apricum proferet Ætas,*
Defodiet, condetque nitentia. ——

under his Cognizance, and "open and naked to the Eyes of Him," to whom we must give an Account; then, what will it profit us before God, to dissemble before Men? — Only with the Hypocrites, at the last Day, to be cast into the lowest Pit of Destruction.

"God, then, will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing; and will render to every Man according to his Works, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil;" for, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known," for, "God will bring to Light the hidden things of Darkness, and make manifest the Counsels of the Heart." And!

With what Horror will Men then behold all the Sins of their Lives made publick, and set in Order before them! - How will they lament their former Impieties, and wish they had then Time to grow wise again, and to resist the Temptations of an evil and deceitful World! - This Thought must surely suggest to us the Wisdom of a better Conduct, whilst we have yet Opportunity, and our Day of Grace as yet remains. But further,

The Scripture tells us that those Words and Actions of Men which seem most inconsiderable, and

moſt likely to be exempted, will yet be accounted for, & ſtrictly inquired into: "I ſay unto you (ſays our Bleſſed Saviour,) that every IDLE Word, (by which, if our Lord do not mean every UNPROFITABLE Word, yet we may reſt aſſured that every WICKED Word,) "that Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an Account of in the Day of Judgment;" for, "by thy Words (ſays he) thou ſhalt be juſtified, & by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemned."

By this Saying, our Saviour deſignedly confutes an Opinion, but too common in the World, [viz.] "That Men's Words ſignify but little, and that no Account will be taken of them hereafter." To obviate this Miſtake, He purpoſedly adds, "By thy Words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemned." (1)

Men, therefore, muſt not think that all their lewd and obſcene Talk — that all their raſh Oaths and Imprecations — all their atheiſtical Diſcourſe, and profane Jeſts upon Religion and the holy Scriptures (2) — that all their Calumnies, Reproaches, & Slanders

(1) What we ſay, & what we think deſignedly, is as truly a Part of our Doings, as what we act. — Our Diſcourſe may be of as much Service or Harm to others; and even our inward Imaginations may as much prove us to be good or bad, as our Actions themſelves: We muſt, therefore, give an Account of them, either with Grief or Joy, according as their Tendencies have been either right or wrong.

(2) Wickedneſs in *Jeſt*, is *real* Impiety.

Slanders of good Men — and all their officious Lies to ſerve a preſent Turn, will paſs for nothing at the great and terrible Day of the Lord: — No; —

The Judge himſelf hath expreſsly told us, that of "all ſuch Words Men ſhall give an Account in the Day of Judgment." St. Jude alſo tells us, out of an ancient Prophecy from Enoch, that "the Lord ſhall come with ten thouſand of his Saints to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, not only of their ungodly Deeds, which they have committed, but likewiſe of all their hard Speeches, which ungodly Sinners have ſpoken againſt him."

But further; — We muſt be accountable to God alſo for all the Neglects and Omiſſions of our Duty, as well as for the poſitive Commiſſion of Sin, and that, in Proportion to the Advantages & Opportunities we have had of doing more or greater Good: ſo our bleſſed Saviour tells us, "unto whomſoever MUCH is given, of him MUCH will be required."

Many are apt to think, that if they do but abſtain from notorious and flagrant Vices — that if, (as they do no eminent Good,) they do no great Evil, that this negative Virtue will ſerve their Turn in the Day of the Lord. But,

Our Lord himſelf hath moſt expreſsly declared

the contrary: "A good Tree, (ſays he,) will bring forth good Fruit:" and, by the Parable of the fooliſh Virgins, who, "for Want of Oil in their Lamps," were ſhut out of the Kingdom of God, he declares to us the dangerous State of thoſe who ſlumber-away their Lives in a ſlothful Inactivity, and are not careful either to keep-alive Grace in their Hearts, or to "ſhew-forth the Light of good Works" in their Lives and Converſations. — In the Parable of Talents, he paſſeth a moſt ſevere Sentence upon that "ſlothful Servant who hid his Lord's Talent in a Napkin, and buried it in the Earth," without making any Manner of Improvement of it, — "Caſt ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth:" And, in the ſame Chapter where our Saviour repreſents to us the Proceedings of the great Day, the Charge there drawn up againſt them conſiſts of Sins of Omission, and groſs Neglects to the Good which we had the Ability and Opportunity to do: "Depart from me, ye Wicked, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; for, I was hungry, and ye gave me No Meat; thirſty, and ye gave me No Drink; a Stranger, and ye took me Not in; naked, and ye cloathed me Not; ſick, and in Priſon, and ye viſited me Not." Not that Sins of Com-

Confession will NEVER be passed by, and left out of the Account: For, it is taken for granted, that they shall be reckoned for in the FIRST Place: But, the Wisdom of our Saviour chuseth to instance in those Sins which many hope that they shall not be called to Account for, (viz.) the Neglects and Omissions of their Duty, that He might hereby effectually root out of the Minds of Men that false Opinion which they are so apt to entertain concerning such Sins, as if they were of a very light and pardonable Nature.

At the Day of Judgment, then, we must account for all our INWARD, as well as OUTWARD Actions; for the Acts of our Mind, and every Thought of our Heart, especially if it be cherished and entertained by us. (1)

The Neglects and Omissions of our Duty in any Kind, will also come under Consideration, as well as our Commission of what is Evil.

Both our Thoughts, Words, and Works, will be there adjudged. A strict Account will be likewise had of all the Talents committed to our Charge; and of all the Abilities, Opportunities, and Advantages

(1) *Voluntas est quâ peccatur.*
Facti Crimen habet, cedo, qui cuncta peregit.
Serm. LXXXVI.

ſages we have had of doing our Duty, and whether we have made anſwerable Improvements of them.

In a Word: We ſhall be anſwerable for all the Good or Evil which we ourſelves have done, or omitted to do; as alſo, for what hath been done by Others, through our Command or Countenance, or from the Influence of our Council, Perſuaſion, or Example, or which we have been any Ways acceſſary, either to hinder, or promote: — All theſe will be ſurveyed into, & ſtrictly examined & weighed, in an exact Balance, that we may receive a Reward or Puniſhment proportionable to them.

Theſe are the Inſtances, and theſe the Articles, into which Inquiry will be made at the laſt Day; & according to which we muſt either ſtand or fall.

We may be certain, that we ſhall in all things be tried by the Standard of Chriſtianity: whoſoever is profeſſedly "under the Law, ſhall be judged by the Law." — "The Words that I have ſpoken to you, (ſaith Chriſt,) the ſame ſhall judge you at the laſt Day." And St. Paul, "God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel."

As for any thing further, how it may pleaſe infinite Mercy to deal with the Jew and the Gentile, (thoſe of them, we mean, to whom the Word was never preached; for whoſoever hath heard it, tho he

received

received it not; will yet be considered as under it, with this Difference, that "he shall receive the greater Damnation,") this concerns us not; for whom it is sufficient, that we are assured that the strictest Conformity to the moral System, or even to the Christian, upon the bare Principle of Morality, will never procure us the Appellation of "good & faithful Servants." (z)

It is our Wisdom of Conduct, therefore, in the mean Time, to look into the Gospel, there to learn what we should be; and into our Hearts and Lives, there to see what indeed, we are, and thence to conclude what in the next World, (whether in a State of Life or Death,) we shall be; and so to live as that we may be prepared for that distant, though awful Event; that we "may be thought worthy to escape all evil things, and to stand before the Son of Man." But,

II. Of the Equity of this Procedure, which will be "to reward every Man ACCORDING to his Works."

The Rectitude of the eternal Counsels of God, are in nothing more clearly seen than in that equitable Proportion

(z) See the 18th Article of Religion.

Proportion of his Favour or Diſpleaſure, which he will hereafter ſhew towards us, according to our ſeveral Demerits at his Hands.

In human Laws, and all judiciary Proceedings, this hath been the Aim and End of all their Inquiries, that they may render to every Man according to the juſt Reward of their Deeds; and the more we diſcover of this, in the EXECUTIVE Juſtice of the Almighty, the more we muſt admire it, and more willingly comply with it, that we may ſhare in his Favour according to his ample and abundant Goodneſs, and avoid thoſe extreme Maledictions which he will pour out upon all the ungodly, and daring Offenders againſt his holy Laws. — For, according to our well, or ill Management of the ſhort Time, of Trial, here allotted us, will our eternal State be proportioned.

This is a Concluſion which natural Reaſon might deduce from a Conſideration of the Attributes and Perfections of God. For, if God be the Governor and Judge of the World, he cannot but take-notice of the Behaviour of his Subjects; & if he be infinitely Juſt, he muſt, one Time or other, impartially diſtribute Juſtice, and diſtinguiſh the Good from the Bad, by different Allotments of Rewards and Puniſhments. But,

What-

Whatever human Reason might deduce in this Case; God, in the Revelation of his Will to Mankind, hath laid open the whole Scheme of his Providence to us. From thence, therefore, it is, that we who acknowledge that Revelation, are to be informed in the Counsels and Resolutions of God: and if the Doctrine before us be there positively and indisputably asserted, we have THEN the same Arguments for the Truth and Certainty of it, as we have for the Profession of our Religion itself.

Our blessed Saviour, in all the Representations he hath given us of his last coming to judge the World, hath positively declared that he will pronounce an impartial and irreversible Sentence on all the Actions of Men; - That no Pretensions whatever shall distinguish them in his Favour, who are "Workers of Iniquity." If they have been negligent in the Practice of their Duty, they must expect to fall under the common Malediction. And,

What he thus lays down, his Apostles aud Disciples do every where strongly inculcate. "He will judge the World in Righteousness." — "We must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the Body, according that he hath done, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil." — "Whatsoever we sow, that shall we also reap." (Serm. LXXXVI.) That

That Men will be rewarded according to the Quality and Kind of their Actions, is a thing moſt clear & certain. Good will be rewarded to the Good, & Evil to the Evil; (1) This is the conſtant Tenor of the Bible: "If thou doeſt WELL, ſhalt thou not be accepted? (ſaith God to Cain,) but if ILL, Sin lieth at the Door." Again, "The Wages of Sin is Death, but the Gift of God (to good Men) is eternal Life." Hither belong thoſe innumerable Texts in which Glory, and Honour, and Immortality are promiſed to thoſe who live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World; and Wickedneſs and Diſobedience, Sin and Irreligion are threatned with dreadful and eternal Puniſhments: "Indignation & Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil."

It is only the Difference in Men's Actions that will difference their future Conditions. This is the Tenor of all wiſe Laws, and is moſt eminently ſeen in all the Laws of our Lord & Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: He gave them for the completeſt Rules to Men's Lives, and hath annexed to them moſt glorious Rewards

(1) The Diſtinction in the Day of Judgment will not be between Poor and Rich, between Mean and Mighty, between Noble and Ignoble: but Good or Bad will be the only Terms to diſtinguiſh one Man from another at that great Tribunal. See Note (A) Vol. II. page 282, &c.

ready to encourage our Obedience; but hath made them to breath out nothing but Woes and intolerable Miſeries to all that diſobey; and theſe he will moſt aſſuredly execute. This our Saviour hath told us plainly long ago: - "When the Son of Man ſhall come again the ſecond Time, it will be in the Glory of his Father, to render to every Man according to his Works," and aſſign them an eternal Portion, good or bad, according to the Nature & Quality of their Converſation in this World: not according to empty Notions and contentious Opinions, which fooliſh Men earneſtly diſpute about: - Not according to Men's Faith or Knowledge, if they be void of the Fruits of Righteouſneſs: - Not according to Men's Zeal in particular Parties and Factions, or in the bare outward Profeſſion even of the true Religion itſelf: - Not according to the uncharitable Judgment, which raſh Men are apt to paſs one upon another: - Not according to any unconditionate Decree, or Fore-Appointment of God: But according as Men have lived in the Ways of Piety or Profaneneſs; in Sobriety or Defilement; in the Practice of Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs, and univerſal Charity; or of Injuſtice, Iniquity, and Unrighteouſneſs; according to This, ſhall the final Sentence paſs.

Fatal, therefore, is the Miſtake of all thoſe, who expect to be judged by Any OTHER Meaſure. Who, without true Virtue, expect to be ſaved, by Means of any thing they can poſſibly do for themſelves, or that any other Perſons can do for them. Who hope to obtain Salvation, either by any unconditionate Favour and Decree of God; when the Apoſtle expreſsly declares on the contrary, that "God is no Reſpecter of Perſons," and that he hath "choſen Men to Salvation through Belief of the Truth, and Sanctification of the Spirit." - Or who rely on their zealous Profeſſion of the true Religion; when even to thoſe who "taught in his Streets, & in his Name had caſt out Devils, & done many wonderful Works, yet our Saviour replies, I know you not whence you are, depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity." - Or who hope to be ſaved, by Virtue of any ſuperſtitious Commutations; as the Phariſees, who under Pretence of contributing to the Service of the Temple, excuſed Men from relieving the Neceſſities even of their Parents themſelves. - Nor is the Error of thoſe Men at all leſs fatal, who depend that they ſhall be ſaved by their Faith; if thereby they mean any thing elſe than That Obedience of Faith, as the Apoſtle ſtiles it, which is the Practice of Righteouſneſs. - Or that they ſhall be ſaved by the Merits of Chriſt;

Christ; if thereby they mean any thing else, than the Terms of that Covenant for the Acceptation of Repentance, which is the Purchase of the Merits and Death of Christ. Or that they shall be saved by Grace; if by That Term they mean any thing else than the Gospel itself, even "That Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, by Teaching us that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." — But further,

The Rewards and Punishments of the next Life will be dispensed out to us not only according to the Kind and Quality of our Actions, but also to the Degree of them, and bear a Proportion to it.

This Particular, the Scripture most plainly represents to us, and most fully asserts it. — This is the Reason and End of all Laws, the Maintenance and Support of all Government, the Foundation and Ground-work of all Religion. In Other Matters, therefore, which are of less Importance; or Opinions of particular and more minute Consideration; which depend on a Variety of Circumstances, and on the Truth of many collateral Notions which must carefully be compared together: In These

there will always be Room for Difference of Apprehensions, and many Errors possibly may be of small Consequence. But This Doctrine, of Rewards and Punishments finally proportionable to Men's Behaviour; is the Root of Virtue, and the vital Principle of Religion. It is a Truth of the same Certainty and of the same Importance, with the Acknowledgment of the very Being of God, and of the natural and essential Difference between Good and Evil. For which Reason the Apostle in a similar Text, by a very lively and expressive Figure, represents it under the Similitude of things which have in Nature the most immediate and necessary Connection: "Whatsoever a Man soweth, That shall he also reap." And what our Saviour alledged upon another Occasion, to express the Reasonableness of judging concerning Men's Hearts and their Actions; may no less properly be applied here, as a Rule for every Man to judge from his present Actions concerning his future State; "Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles." As the Fruit is always of the same Kind, with the Stock that bears it; and the Grain reaped, is necessarily of the same Sort with the Seed that was sown: so Men's final State of Happiness or Misery, will be the proper & correspondent Effect of their present Actions.

"He

"He that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption: But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting."

There will, then, be an Exactness of Particulars, in the Degrees and Proportions of those respective States. And, tho in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, there may seem to be something that might favour the contrary Opinion, when our Saviour represents himself giving to them that came in late, as well as to them that had born the Burden and Heat of the Day, to each Man equally a Penny; yet in Reality, the Meaning of that Parable, is only to declare, that Sinners of the Gentiles, upon their true Conversion, should become equally capable of the Benefits of the Gospel, and of being admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, as the Jews who had been all along the People of God. But, that in the Participation of that Happiness, into which they had all equally a Right to enter, they should all enjoy an EQUAL Portion; This the Parable does not affirm. And in other Places, the Scripture, as the well as the Reason of things, does on the contrary expressly mention a great Variety of Degrees, Telling us of some that "shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament," and others "as the Stars for ever and ever;" and among these, of some that

ſhall differ from others; "as one Star differeth from another Star in Glory:" That one Man ſhall receive a "Prophet's Reward;" & another, the "Reward of a Righteous Man," and a third, inferiour to Both of theſe, yet ſhall in no wiſe loſe his Reward:" That one ſhall "receive Authority over ten Cities," and another over "five:" every Man according to his Improvement in this World.

On the other Side, in the Diſtribution of Puniſhments: Our Saviour threatens thoſe who continue impenitent under the Goſpel, with more heavy and dreadful Puniſhments; and tells us, that in the Day of Judgment "their Condition ſhall be far worſe than theirs of Tyre and Sidon, - of Sodom and Gomorroh; and threatens concerning the hypocritical Phariſees, that they ſhall receive (περισσοτερον Κριμα,) greater Damnation; For, It is but reaſonable that in Proportion to the Degrees of Light and Knowledge which the Goſpel diſpenſeth to Men, the Motives to Obedience, and in Conſequence, the Puniſhments of their Diſobedience, ought to ariſe. "To whomſoever MUCH is given, of him will MUCH be required; and to whomſoever MUCH is imparted, of him will Men require the MORE" - "That Servant who knew his Lord's Will, but did not according to it, will be beaten with MANY Stripes."

This

This Method of proceeding, our Saviour not only assures us, will be in Fact the Method in which God will proceed in judging the World; but moreover declares it to be, of Neceſſity, agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of the righteous Judge of the whole Earth; appealing in this to Men's natural Senſe of Right and Equity, in Matters of Juſtice and Judgment among themſelves. For ſo he adds in the very next Words; "for unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more."

In the Matter of PUNISHMENT, this Judging of Men according to their Works, is to be underſtood ſtrictly and literally, according to the exact Deſert or Merit of their Works. For Puniſhment being GOD's STRANGE Work, (as the Scripture expreſſes it;) which he inflicts, not with any Delight, but merely becauſe it is fit and neceſſary; it is therefore infinitely certain, that no Man ſhall be puniſhed otherwiſe, than according to the exact Deſert or Demerit of his Actions: But in the Matter of REWARD, the Caſe is different; For here, God may do what he pleaſes with his own, and beſtow his Grace and Favour, his Bounty and Free Gifts, in what Manner he himſelf pleaſes. — Merit, (which ſome

vainly affect to talk of,) we poſſibly can have none. For, our good Works, (ſo called,) are at the beſt ſo imperfect, as to need Pardon rather than deſerve a Reward; and if they were never ſo perfect, yet they were ſtill nothing but doing what was our Duty to do, and we ſhould even Then be but unprofitable Servants. Merit therefore, it is plain, we cannot poſſibly have Any; And yet ſuch is the Goodneſs of God, that by his gracious Promiſe and Free Gift in Chriſt, he is pleaſed to give us as certain a Title and as undoubted a Claim to the Happineſs of Heaven upon our ſincere Obedience, as if we had really deſerved it of Right. And this his Free Gift he is moreover pleaſed to diſtribute in ſuch a Manner, that though it cannot juſtly be ſaid to be beſtowed on us FOR our Works, yet it will be exactly in Proportion to them; and to every Man ſhall be given his Reward, tho' not indeed upon Account of any Merit in his Works, yet ACCORDING as his Works ſhall be.

This is the Seed-Time for Eternity, in which he "that ſoweth ſparingly" the Seed of good Works, ſhall reap but ſparingly" hereafter - but "he that ſoweth bountifully," whether of Virtue or Vice, ſhall reap bountifully of the Fruits of his own Hands.

The

The more Good or Evil any Man doth in this State of Probation, the greater will be the Reward or Punishment which he will receive at the Hand of God " for even thereafter as a Man feareth, so is his Displeasure."

Circumstances, indeed, may very much alter the Quality of our Actions; and there are Crimes of a more heinous Nature, abstractedly considered, which, from the Motives upon which they are committed, or the Manner of committing them, may receive fewer, or more heightening Aggravations. So that " it will be more tollerable, at the Day of Judgment, for some Sinners, than for others, in the same Kind, according to the different Degrees of Ignorance or Malice, of Inadvertency or Presumption whereby they offend. (1) — But,

This

(1) We are far from the Conceit of the Stoicks, who made all Sins *alike*. We acknowledge that some Sins of Ignorance and Infirmity may consist with a State of Grace, which is either quite destroyed, or at least much eclipsed and clouded by other Sins, that are more heinous in their Nature, and more deliberately performed. It is in this Sense that the Word *deadly Sin* is to be understood, wherever it is expressed; for, though in the Strictness of Justice, every Sin is deadly; yet, in the Dispensation of the Gospel, those Sins are only deadly, that do deeply wound the Conscience, and drive away Grace. Again,

Some Sins have more, (i.e) deserve greater Punishment, than others, because they are either worse in their own Nature, or accompanied with Circumstances, that aggravate, instead of alleviating them.

This is a Conſideration, which Sinners, who pro-
feſs

Thus, If bad Actions, known to be ſuch, are done with previous Deliberation and Contrivance, which are called *wilful and preſumptuous Sins*, they are very highly criminal. But, if we do amiſs in ſome ſmaller Matter, thro Inconſiderateneſs, or other Weakneſs of Mind, or elſe thro a ſudden unforeſeen Attack of Temptation, which are uſually called *Sins of Infirmity* or *Surprize*. theſe, tho real, are yet leſs Offences. And, if laſtly, we act wrong, thro invincible Ignorance, (i.e) have no Means of knowing better; then the Action is not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, a Fault *in us*, tho it be really *in itſelf*. But if we might, with a reaſonable Attention, have known our Duty, & did not attend; we are juſtly blameable, even for a careleſs Ignorance; and full as much for a deſigned one, as if we had known ever ſo well.

Another Difference in the Kinds of Sins, is, that tho they be only in ſmaller Inſtances; yet if Perſons take ſo little Pains to guard againſt them, that they live in a conſtant or frequent Practice of them, which are called *habitual Sins*; the Guilt of theſe may be full as heavy as that of greater Tranſgreſſions, provided they be leſs common: But, if they be great, and habitually indulged alſo, this makes the worſt of Caſes. Indeed, (comparatively ſpeaking,) The Importance of every Duty, and the Malignity of every Breach of our Duty, ſtand higher in the Catalogue of Virtues & Vices, according to their Rank and Priority in the Ten Commandments. Thus the Sins of diſbelieving God, or worſhipping Idols, condemned in the Firſt and Second Precepts, are more heinous Crimes than taking God's Name in Vain, & breaking the Sabbath. And the Sins againſt Heaven, prohibited in the Firſt Table, or the four firſt Commandments, are more heinous Provocations than the Tranſgreſſions committed againſt Man, in the ſix laſt. Again, The Duties we owe to Societies, or the Relative Duties, are bound upon us by ſtronger Ties than thoſe we owe to ſingle Perſons, by Reaſon of the Extenſiveneſs of their Influence and their general Good. And we muſt at ſight allow, that Murder is more criminal

than

ſelves Diſciples, muſt be particularly careful how they take Refuge in: Sinners, who are to be judged by a Law which expreſsly requires them to "abſtain from all Appearance of Evil:" - "to be harmleſs and undefiled, and without Rebuke:" "to have Reſpect unto all God's Commandments;" and "to adorn the Doctrine of our Lord & Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, in all things."

In Vain, then, ſhall we boaſt ourſelves of being of the

than Adultery; and Adultery more criminal than Theft; Theft more criminal than Slander; and Slander worſe than Coveting.

That Maxim of the Stoicks, therefore, that all Sins are equal, is to be looked upon as one of thoſe extravagant Principles, which they thought themſelves more concerned to maintain, in Order to keep up the Pomp and Vanity of their Sect, than from any firm or real Conviction of its Truth. But,

Tho all Sins are not equal, yet every Sin is an Offence againſt God, and contrary to Order; and which, therefore, no Conſideration, however it may be ſuppoſed to leſſen, can wholly or abſolutely acquit us from all Guilt of it. This, therefore, is a Diſtinction which Chriſtians muſt by no Means take Refuge in, whoſe Religion requires them to "abſtain from all Appearance of Evil." For, in Fact, whoever commits, tho but a ſmall Sin, preſumptuouſly, in Hopes only of a light Puniſhment, will, by that very Preſumption, merit a heavy one. — See Vol. III. page 302. — In a Word,

The Circumſtances that aggravate Sin, are, to ſin againſt the Senſe and Checks of Conſcience, - to do Evil deliberately, and after having had Time to reflect upon what we are going to do, - to fall often into the ſame Sin, - and to give Offence to others by our Sins.

Serm. LXXXVI.

the beſt conſtituted Religion, of our moſt Holy Faith, if we build not upon it Materials accordingly, and exceed in Righteouſneſs as we exceed in the Means to it; well-knowing, that if we do not, inſtead of gaining us the Kingdom of Heaven, it will but increaſe our Condemnation; and that it will be more tollerable, in the Day of Judgment, for the moſt unenlightened Heathens than for us, who have ſinned under the cleareſt Light, & under the greateſt Advantages of God's Aſſiſtance.

How terrible is God's Wrath, when He puniſhes his People for their Sins in this World? It is called "The Day of the Lord's Vengeance:" — "The great and terrible Day of the Lord." And! If it was thus, "When his Wrath was kindled, yea but a little," - when Mercy was mixed with Severity; What will it be, when "He ſhall ſuffer his whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe, and ſhall ſtir up his Wrath to come among us?" For then, neither Power, Wiſdom, Eloquence nor Craft, will be of any Avail; for the great Judge of that Day can neither be overawed by Power, exceeded in Wiſdom, moved by Eloquence, nor be betrayed by Craft; but "every Man will receive according to his Deeds."

In a Word, — When we meditate upon the Accounts which God, in his Word, hath given us of the

the exceeding Solemnity of that Judgment, — The Majesty of the Judge, and the Consequences of his Sentence: — When we consider This, as what so nearly concerns us, and as That by which we are to be unalterably determined to an Eternity of Happiness or Misery; We shall find that no Consideration of any Kind can be of equal Concern to us; nor consequently, any thing equally to be regarded by us, for our Duration in this World is but of short Continuance, and therefore but of little Moment; but our future State is eternal, and therefore of the utmost Consequence to us.

Sermon

SERMON LXXXVII.

On the same Subject.

2 Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the "Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may "receive the things done in the Body."

Before we proceed to the Uses we are to make of the Doctrine before us, it may be necessary, perhaps, to speak a few Words respecting the TIME, when this important Event will take-place.

The Heathen World, in general held, that it immediately succeeded the Death of each Person; or at least, on their Arrival in another State. Some Christians, and those very good ones, have been so far of the same Opinion, as to allow of such a thing, together with one last and general Judgment.

Now, whether This be so or not, what we now say is certain, that it will not be till the End of this World, when "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, and all things be dissolved." The "Harvest" is expressly said to be "the End of the World;" and the

the Day of that Judgment is every where in Scripture said to be "the last Day," (i.e.) when Time itself shall be no more, but all be swallowed up in the boundless Ocean of Eternity. — Now,

Altho' that Day be actually fixed, and appointed in the determinate Counsel of God, for, (as the Apostle saith,) "He hath appointed a Day, in which He will judge the World;" yet where to place it, is beyond the Reach of Human, or even Angelic Wisdom; "of that Day, and that Hour knoweth no Man; not even the Angels," it being known to the Father alone, and put in his Power. (t) Thus far, indeed

(t) The Word, *Day*, in the above Place, as in all other Texts of Scripture, where the Day of Judgment is spoken of, is not at all needful to be understood of that particular *Portion* or *Quantity* of Time, which we call a *Day*; But it signifies only, in general, a determinate Time or Season, how short or how long soever the Continuance or Duration of it may be. And, God's having *appointed* this Time, does not signify his declaring *when* it is to be, but only the Certainty of his having decreed that it *shall* be. — On the contrary, the particular Time when the World shall be judged, is One of those Secrets, which, for the wisest Reasons, (that Men might *watch* and *be ready always*,) the Father has reserved in his own Power. "Of that Day & that Hour (says our Lord) knoweth no Man; no, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." This only does the Scripture assure us, that "as a Snare shall it come on all them, that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth." That as, in the Days before the Flood, and as, before the Overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha, Men were eating and drinking, and thought not of the Destruction till

indeed, we have pretty good Warrant for, that the general Aſſize will not be till after what St John calls the SECOND Reſurrection: But when we have puſhed our Diſcoveries to the utmoſt, "When ſhall theſe things be?" is a Point, which will not be reveal'd but by the thing itſelf. In the mean Time, he who is prepared for it, knows enough; for he knows, that, let it come when it will, it cannot take him to a Diſadvantage. What there is need we ſhould be told concerning it, the Scripture hath revealed: [viz] that it ſhall come unexpectedly, and that it ſhall come ſoon. — The general Judgment may come when we

it came upon them, "ſo alſo ſhall the coming of the Son of Man be."

There were ſome in the Apoſtles' Times, who, by Miſapplication of certain Prophecies relating to the Deſtruction of the Jewiſh State, thought the World was to end in that Age. But from our Saviour's own Prophecy, that Jeruſalem ſhould be "trodden down of the Gentiles, till the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" (which is plainly a long Seaſon:) & from the Apoſtle's Exhortation, "Let no Man deceive you by any Means, by Word or Letter as that the Day of Chriſt is at Hand; for That Day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away firſt, and That Man of Sin be revealed;" From theſe Paſſages it is evident, that not the End of the World, but the Deſtruction only of Judæa was to be expected in That Age. Nevertheleſs, whatever be the Time, how near, or far off ſoever, when this Judgment is to be, it makes no Difference at all to any particular Perſon; ſeeing his particular Concern in the Judgment of the Great Day, depends intirely on the State in which He himſelf ſhall leave the World; which Time, he is ſure, cannot be very far diſtant from him. — See more to this Purpoſe, Vol. V. Page 238 &c with the Notes.

we least think of it. But, however distant it may possibly be in itself, yet, to every one of us it is undoubtedly, in Effect, very near, and even at the Doors. For,

"It is appointed unto Men, once to die, and after that the Judgment." A few Years, it may be a few Days, will bring us to our End here: and in whatever State Death finds us, in the same must we be judged at the last Day: for "there is no Device, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whether we are hastening." Its Uncertainty, therefore, is the greatest Argument we can use, for a constant Preparation for it.

As to the Place, WHERE the general Judgment will be held, It was a received Opinion of the Jews, followed by some Christians, that the Scene of the general Resurrection and Judgment, should be the Vale of Jehosophat, for thus we read in the Prophet (Joel iii. 2) "I will also gather all Nations, and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehosophat, and will plead with them there for my People, and for my Heritage Israel," - -

Having thus illustrated and confirmed the Doctrine contained in the Words before us, I am now,

Lastly, To see what Improvements can be made both in general, as well as in particular from it, in

Order to fit and prepare us for ſo ſolemn an Event, that we may now ſo live, that in the Laſt Day we may be able to give up our Account with Joy.

And here, — Whoever ſeriouſly examines his own Conſcience will find it repreſenting to him many and innumerable Sins, both of Omiſſion and Commiſſion, for which he will not be able to abide a Trial before God - and which, therefore, it will be his great Concern, in Time, to blot out by Repentance, before the Day of the Lord ſhall come.

It was by this Means, that Men were always taught to make themſelves ready againſt the FIRST coming and Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt; - And, in what Senſe ſoever the Kingdom of God is underſtood, whether of Grace, or of Majeſty and Glory, it is the declared Duty of Mankind to fit and prepare themſelves for it by Repentance & Converſion.

St. John, the Baptiſt, was ſent to prepare the Way before the Face of the Lord, at his firſt coming, by preaching the Baptiſm of Repentance; and ſurely, the Argument is much more to be enforced, and the Concluſiveneſs of it is much more viſible and convincing, when it is applied to the perſuading Men to prepare themſelves againſt the SECOND glorious and dreadful Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, when He ſhall come in Juſtice and Vengeance, in

the

the Clouds of Heaven, and attended with the many thousands of his holy Angels, to visit the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity.

Whatever Room there might be in the first of these Appearings for Men to repent, & amend afterwards, who had not done it before, - there will be no Place for this at his second coming to judge the World. They who repented not at the first Preaching of John, might afterwards, upon the Discourses of our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles, "repent, & turn to God, and do Works meet for Repentance:" But now, "He that shall be then unjust must be unjust still, - and He that shall be then filthy, must be filthy still:" for there is no Amendment in the Grave, and in Time of Vengeance what will Repentance profit us?

Let us reflect therefore, but a Moment on an Eternity hereafter, to be dealt out to us, either of Happiness or Misery, according to our Deeds in this Life, and every other Thought, but how to prepare for it, must vanish like the Morning-Dew.

This is the Time of God's Patience, and Forbearance, and Goodness towards Sinners, - "who is not willing that any shd perish, but that all should come to Repentance." But, if Men will despise his Goodness, abuse his Patience, and reject the Means of

Salvation; then, to their Sorrow, and by woefull Experience they will find that there is a Day of Wrath to come, and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God." For,

That will be a Day of Justice and Execution without further Delay. — Then no trifling Excuses will be taken to palliate the Sins, & hide the Follies of Men — It will be in vain then to charge our wilful Sins on the Infirmity of our Nature, the Power of Temptation, the Subtilty of the Devil, the Allurement of Company, the Practice of the World, the Corruption of the Age, the Fault of Education, or the Folly of Youth - such Excuses will then be too weak to be accepted, when it will appear to the eternal Confusion of such, that their own vicious Inclinations were the only Occasions of them. But,

This general Consideration may more properly be enforced, according to our Intent, from the Particulars already spoken to, as,

First, From the Certainty of a future Judgment. If there be such a Day certainly coming, it may be justly a Matter of Wonder and Astonishment to us to see the almost general Growth of Impiety and Wickedness among us; how wicked Men are, and insensible of that great and terrible Day of the Lord; notwithstanding all the Assurance we have of its cer-

tain

certain Approach, and that we cannot avoid it!

If we profess to believe in this awful and terrible Day, dare we otherwise than live as becometh those who do believe it?

Let us imagine that we saw, (for so certainly we shall see,) "the Son of Man coming in the Clouds with Power and great Glory, and all his holy Angels with him;" and that we heard the Trumpet sound, and a mighty Voice, piercing the Heavens and the Earth, saying, "Arise, ye Dead, and come to Judgment." — There inthroned in Glory unutterable sits the sovereign Judge, the gracious Redeemer! — Thousand of thousands ministring unto him, and ten thousand Times ten thousand standing before him! — See that Earth, once the Seat of all our Cares and Fears, now wrapped in universal Flame; the Heavens passing away with insufferable Noise, melting with fervent Heat; the Sun extinguished; the Stars starting from their Courses, and all the System of created things, hastening into utter Destruction! — Oh terrible Distress! — "for the Day of the Lord is come, and who may abide it!"

What Thoughts, what Sentiments, would then be uppermost with us! — How should we wish to have led holy and religious Lives whilst we were upon Earth, and whilst it was in our Power, before

the things that belonged to our Peace were hid from our Eyes, & all Opportunity of Recovery loſt! (1)

Where ſhall we fly, if Conſcience condemns us, and we dare not approach that impartial Judge! In Vain ſhall we call upon the Rocks, to hide us; or on the Mountains to cover us: Rocks and Mountains will themſelves diſſolve; and neither be able to ſhelter our Heads, nor ſupport our Feet! In Vain ſhall we ſollicit our Friends to intercede; our Friends will then be too deeply concerned themſelves to regard the Cauſe of others: - And what! Ah! what could Patrons or Friends avail, when the clement, the mediatorial Hour is now abſolutely paſt and gone, and we have not made Him our Interceſſor, who would have been as mighty to ſave and reward, as He is now to pour out Diſpleaſure, to puniſh and avenge! What, too, will diſſembling profit us, ? or how can we expect to deceive him, "whoſe Eyes are as a Flame of Fire," and pierce into the Heart's inmoſt Receſs! who will lay open before us the whole Volume of our Lives, and place in the univerſal View, all thoſe Thoughts, Words and Deeds of Darkneſs, which in vain we ſecreted from the Eyes of our Fellow-Creatures on Earth:

But

(1) Opportunities neglected are manifeſt Tokens of Folly; They are ſo rarely, if ever recalled, as they generally bring Repentance.

But who can escape the Eyes of Omniscience! And! Dare we, then, whilst it is in our Power, indeed, can we be so given up to a judicial Blindness as to disregard the present Opportunity? an Opportunity, which, if not neglected, will make for our exceeding and eternal Comfort; and the which, if disregarded, through the Space of this transitory Life, (and how soon that may end, God in his Wisdom only knows,) can never be recalled; for, as Death leaves us, so Judgment will find us.

Let, then, the full Persuasion of the Certainty of That Day effectually excite us to the Performance of our Duty; and the rather, as its Approach is to us uncertain; that so we may be able, not only with Peace and Comfort, but even with Joy and Triumph, to entertain the Thoughts of its Coming.

Let us have it frequently in our Thoughts, and carefully practice the Duties preparative to it: for, it is upon the Account we shall then be able to give of our Conduct in this probationary State, that our Happiness or Misery will, to all Eternity, depend.

It is fit, - it is good for us, that we regard that awful Day with Fear and Reverence.

The Effects of such a Fear will be most salutary to us - for, as our Knowledge of this Day of the Lord should persuade us to Repentance and Amend-

ment; ſo, if we ſuffer it to obtain theſe happy Effects upon us, it will at length ſo wholly ceaſe to be a Fear, that it will prove the greateſt Comfort and Support to us under all the Afflictions we can poſſibly meet with in this Life: - for, the Man that is in no other Danger than what he brings upon himſelf by fearing to offend God, will, by the Conſideration of this Laſt Day of Retribution, be ſoon freed from the Fear of what either the Devil or Man can do unto him; for he that by Repentance hath aſſur'd his Hopes of Pardon, thro the Merits of his Redeemer, knowing that God is merciful as well as juſt, and that the ſame Jeſus Chriſt, before whom he is to ſtand at the latter Day, is his Redeemer, will from hence be encouraged to hope that his former Sins will not be imputed unto him. — Inſtead of Terror and Conſternation, he will come, awed indeed, but not confounded, to his Tribunal, and receive the Reward of the juſt — EVERLASTING HAPPINESS.

While, therefore, we meditate upon it, let the whole Soul be exerted to repreſent it to us in the moſt lively Manner; for, ſince ſuch a Time will come, that every Individual muſt appear before his Maker, open and undiſguiſed, ſurely it is good for us to place ourſelves, as it were, already at his Tribunal

bunal-ſeat, and to think, with all the Strength which our Ideas can exert, on the Situation of our Minds at That Time; how every good Action will be then as a Cordial to our trembling Soul, and every bad one as ſo many Accuſations againſt us: — how we ſhall wiſh to blot out every unworthy Thought, Word, and Action of our Life, and to place good Ones in their Stead! — but, all will THEN be over; "He that is holy, muſt be holy ſtill; and he that is filthy, muſt be filthy ſtill." A fatal FINIS will be wrote at the End of that Book where our Life is recorded, and it will be cloſed for ever and ever!

What would they then give, who have diſregarded this final Scene, to recall their paſt Life, that they might with Delight and Alacrity live ſo as to render that Trial a joyful one, & to ſee their Names taken from among the Liſts of the loſt and miſerable, and placed in the Book of Life!

Let this Idea, therefore, of our great Account, be habitually in our Thoughts; for, whoever makes this familiar to his Mind, will need no other Motive to be good.

The Influence of it is great; for, as there is no Duty whatever which the Conſideration of that dreadful Account we muſt one Day make, is not proper to excite us to; ſo, on the other Hand, there

is no Sin or Evil whatever which it hath not a direct and powerful Influence to correct and reſtrain.

Such a Knowledge, if duly attended to, would balance the evil Inclinations which the Devil ſtill ſuggeſts to us, and raiſe us to almoſt the State of Perfection from whence we fell, - and ſpur us on to a magnanimous Perſeverance in good Purpoſes. For though our Nature is moſt happy when we follow Virtue, as being moſt ſuited to it; yet, as it is a fallen one, We want ſome Aſſiſtance to lead us from Sin and Sorrow, and keep us in, or guide us to the Paths of Peace and Virtue. But,

A ſerious Conſideration of the ſtrict Examination we are to undergo, as to the Uſe we have made of all our Faculties, Opportunities, and Powers, will moſt certainly preſerve us from abuſing them, and make us deſirous of uſing them to the beſt Advantage. (1)

"In Him we live, and move, & have our Being:" Created by his Power, and preſerved by his Goodneſs, let us paſs the Time of our Sojourning here in Fear, remembring the Uncertainty of our Stay, and the awful deciſive Period that is to ſucceed our Diſſolu-

(1) There is not a more effectual Way to revive the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, than ſeriouſly to meditate on what we call, *The FOUR laſt Things*, *DEATH*, *JUDGMENT*, *HEAVEN* and *HELL*.

"Remember Death, - and do not forget Judgment."

Diſſolution. - Let us remember the End of our Being, and improve the remaining Hours of Life to everlaſting Advantage, that when the ſolemn Seaſon approaches, wherein "all Fleſh ſhall gather Paleneſs," we may meet the Meſſenger of Death with triumphant Joy, and ſteadfaſt Hope of eternal Life.

The Heathens had but a very weak and imperfect Knowledge of a future Judgment preſerved to them by Tradition; and yet, what noble Reſolutions did it work within them!

If, then, the ſtronger Evidence which we Chriſtians have of ſuch a future Judgment, begot not in us a ſuitable Behaviour, and anſwerable to our full Perſuaſions of it; how inſenſible of our higheſt Intereſt, and how much beneath the Rate muſt we be, even of Infidelity itſelf! But,

Secondly, From the Conſideration, that All are to appear, and that None are to eſcape the Judgment, we learn, that we are All equally concerned in it, and that it ought, in Reaſon, to have the like Influence upon all Men; becauſe we are all of us, without Deference or Exception, equally liable to the Judgment of God.

The great Buſineſs of Religion, therefore, equally concerns every Man. For, if we muſt All be judg-

ed, then are we All concerned to prepare and provide for it. (1) — But alaſs!

How many are there, (I ſpeak it with Concern,) who live as if they thought that the Buſineſs of Religion concerned them not! But, if the Judgment of God will equally reach all Mankind, then, ſure I am, that it equally concerns all to mind Religion, and a holy and virtuous Life; for That alone "will make us worthy," (as our Saviour ſays,) "to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man."

This is the Reſult of Solomon's Inquiry, What is the great Work and Buſineſs, the great Intereſt and Concernment of Man in this Life: "Let us (ſays he,) hear the Concluſion of the whole Matter, Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole of Man." Religion is our great Concern, becauſe "God will bring every Man, & every Work of Man, into Judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be Evil." But,

Thirdly, From the 3d. Conſideration, that Jeſus Chriſt is to be our Judge, and that we muſt all appear

(1) *Æquè Pauperibus prodeſt, Locupletibus æquè:*
Æquè negletum Pueris, Senibusquè nocebit.
Delegationem iſta Res non recepit.
This Affair cannot be managed by an Attorney.
Sibi quemquè cavere oportet.

pear before his Judgment Seat, we cannot but obſerve, that it greatly concerns every one of us ſo to demean ourſelves in this World, that in the World to come we may be accepted of him. (1)

We are apt to court the Favour of great Men, of the Princes and Judges of this World, that when, (if ever,) we come to ſtand in Need of their Aſſiſtance, we may have the Benefit and Comfort of it.

But, This is not our greateſt Intereſt; there is a greater than any of theſe, whom we are too apt to diſregard and neglect, "The Prince of the Kings "of the Earth; the Man who is ordained of God, "to be Judge both of Quick and Dead:" every Man's Judgment ſhall be from him; it is therefore His Sentence, which above all others, we have moſt Reaſon to deſire or dread. We ſhould, therefore, have regard to him, & by ſubmitting to his Sceptre, and yielding Obedience to his Laws, ſeek his Favour whilſt it may be found, "leſt he break us with a Rod of Iron, and daſh us in Pieces like a Potter's Veſſel, and there be none to deliver."

Let us conſider whom it is we now deſpiſe, and whoſe Laws we now caſt behind us; it is He, who, notwithſtanding his former low Appearance in this World, is now the Lord of Glory, into whoſe Hands

(1) *Nauta qui es, Neptunum placato.* Serm. LXXXVII.

Hands the Father hath committed all Judgment.

And, can there be a greater Madneſs, than to provoke and make Him our Enemy who is to be our Judge? - than to deſpiſe him who can deſtroy us?

He appeared once as a Saviour, to preſerve his People; but, if thro our Obſtinacy and Impenitence we render this Appearance of his ineffectual to our Recovery, He will appear a ſecond Time in a more terrible Manner, as a Judge, and an Avenger. He came once as "a Light into the World," in a gentle Way, to convince and convert Sinners; but if we reſiſt this Light, "He will come in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the Goſpel of his Son."

It is a fearful thing to be to anſwer for ourſelves before the Searcher of all Hearts; to anſwer to him who loved us, for deſpiſing the Love he ſhewed to us; to anſwer to him who died for us, for having crucified him a freſh, and put him to open Shame; and for having accounted the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing. This will be the ſad Caſe of every wilful Sinner. The View of this Miſery and Diſtreſs, which Sinners are calling upon themſelves by their Iniquity, moved the Apoſtle, and muſt ever move thoſe who ſucceed to his Office, to warn Men "to flee from the Wrath to come." We

know

know the Terror of the Lord and therefore perſuade Men. And how happy would it be, if Men, knowing and conſidering theſe Terrors, would ſuffer themſelves to be perſuaded. But further,

Since our bleſſed Saviour, in ſpeaking of the laſt Judgment, is pleaſed more particularly to ſtile himſelf the Son of Man: This Conſideration will give exceeding Comfort to all true Penitents, and arm them againſt thoſe deſponding Thoughts which are ſometimes apt to ariſe in the Minds of very good Men.

How great and numerous ſoever our Sins have been, yet He knows our Infirmities and will therefore make gracious Allowances for the Frailties of our Natures; and if we have but humbled ourſelves for them, and truly repented us of all our Unworthineſs, we know, that "the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt is ſufficient to cleanſe us from all our Sins," and approve us acceptable in the Sight of God; for He who ſhed his Blood for us, we may, (with all Deference to the Rectitude of his Laws,) aſſure ourſelves, will not loſe the ſaving Effects of it, where there is a Poſſibility of applying them. — In a Word;

Since God hath appointed that we muſt all appear one Day in Judgment before him, what ſtronger Argument are we capable of conceiving, in Order

to ſupport us under the Apprehenſions of ſo awful an Appearance, than that the Saviour of Mankind will H.mſelf be our Judge, and viſibly judge us in Perſon of Man!

Had it been allowed us to chuſe ourſelves a Judge, who could we have rather wiſhed for, from whom could we expect a more favourable Sentence than from a Man like ourſelves? One who has ſhown the greateſt Kindneſs that can poſſibly be conceived for human Nature, who is ſenſible of the Follies and Infirmities & Temptations of it, who will not require in us the Purity of the Angels or of unbodied Spirits, for he experimentally knows whereof we are made, the moſt pathetic Invitations; - Aggravating Circumſtance; -- We have abuſed his Love! - We might have been happy, eternally ſo - but now the fatal Moment is arrived - "Depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels," is the dreadful Malediction! But,

Laſtly, From the particular, that all the Actions which Men have done in this Life ſhall come to Account in the next, and they ſhall be judged for them, we learn, that no Conſideration can be preſented to the Mind of Man which ought in Reaſon to be more powerful to beget in us a ſtrict Care and

Conſcience

Conſcience of all our Thoughts, Words, and Works, than this, that after a little While, when the few Days of this Pilgrimage are over, all that we ever did in this World will be ſtrictly examined into, and be approved, or condemned, by the impartial Judgment of God.

It muſt be confeſſed, that there is no Scheme of Religion, beſides that of Chriſtianity, which can poſſibly ſupport the moſt virtuous Perſon under this Thought. Let a Man's Innocence be what it will, let his Virtues riſe to the higheſt Pitch of Perfection attainable in this Life, there will be ſtill in him ſo many ſecret Sins, - ſo many human Frailties, - ſo many Offences of Ignorance, Paſſion, or Prejudice, ſo many unguarded Words and Thoughts, and, in ſhort, ſo many Defects in his beſt Actions that without the Advantages of ſuch an Expiation & Atonement as Chriſtianity has revealed to us, it is impoſſible that he ſhould be cleared before this ſovereign Judge, or that he ſhould be able "to ſtand in his Sight." Our holy Religion ſuggeſts to us the only Means whereby our Guilt may be taken-away, and our imperfect Obedience accepted.

If therefore, we have any true Wiſdom in us - any Love to ourſelves, or any Senſe of our own everlaſting Intereſt, that great Day of Account ſhould al-

made, and remembers that we are but Duſt." And ſurely we may conclude God has not deſigned that Sentence ſhould paſs upon us according to the Rigour of the Law, but the Mildneſs and Mercies of the Goſpel, ſince he has appointed him to be our Judge, who is our Redeemer, who is our High-Prieſt, who is our Intereſſor, who is our Advocate, who is our Brother.

But then, — &c. (under) —

But then, — It muſt be confeſſed, (on the other Hand) that this Conſideration is not without Terror to the Wicked; for, ſurely, no Award of Juſtice can be ſo inſupportable as That which comes from the very Seat of Mercy — Can Tongue expreſs, or can Heart conceive the Anguiſh, which will rend our Souls, when the dire Sentence of Condemnation ſhall paſs - A Sentence from his Lips, which breath only Mercy and Love to the Juſt; - and which we deſpiſed, when calling us upon Earth to Him, with the moſt pathetic Invitations; - Aggravating Circumſtance; -- We have abuſed his Love! - We might have been happy, eternally ſo - but now the fatal Moment is arrived - "Depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels," is the dreadful Malediction! But,

Laſtly, From the particular, that all the Actions which Men have done in this Life ſhall come to Account in the next, and they ſhall be judged for them, we learn, that no Conſideration can be preſented to the Mind of Man which ought in Reaſon to be more powerful to beget in us a ſtrict Care and

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ways be before us, and we ſhould govern every Action of our Lives with a ſerious and awful Regard to it. For,

Can we be negligent of our Lives and Actions, when we conſider, that all the Paſſages of them are upon Record, and are written in indelible Characters? — "I remember all their Wickedneſs, and their Doings are before me, (ſaith God:") "The Lord hath ſworn by the Excellency of Jacob, ſurely I will not forget any of their Works:"

We ſin, and forget that we have ſinned; but God chargeth himſelf with the Remembrance of all our Doings.

Did Men ſeriouſly conſider and believe theſe things, and were they affected with them as they ought, they could not but lead their Lives agreeably to them; we could not commit Sin with ſo much Greedineſs and Pleaſure were we verily perſuaded, that every evil Action which we do in this Life, will be Matter of Charge and Accuſation againſt us in the great Day of Accounts.

The Lord is juſt and righteous, and will judge the Earth with Equity & Truth. Hath he eſtabliſhed his Laws in Goodneſs and Mercy, and ſhall he not puniſh the Tranſgreſſors of them?

"O! think not, bold Man, becauſe thy Puniſh-

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ment is delayed, that the Arm of the Lord is weakened; neither flatter thyself with Hopes that he winketh at thy Doings. — His Eye pierceth the Secrets of every Heart, and he remembereth them forever; he respecteth not the Persons, nor the Stations of Men.

"The High and the Low, the Rich and the Poor, the Wise and the Ignorant, when the Soul hath shaken off the cumberous Shackles of this mortal Life, shall equally receive from the Sentence of God a just and everlasting Retribution, according to their Works. Then shall the Wicked tremble and be afraid; but the Heart of the Righteous shall rejoice in his Judgments.

"O fear the Lord, therefore, all the Days of thy Life, and walk in the Paths which he hath opened before thee, let Prudence admonish thee, let Temperance restrain, let justice guide thy Hand, Benevolence warm thy Heart, and Gratitude to Heaven inspire thee with Devotion. These shall give thee Happiness in thy present State, and bring thee to the Mansions of eternal Felicity in the Paradise of God." — But further,

From this last Particular we also learn that Sentence will be passed, at the final Judgment, according to the GOOD or BAD Actions of Men.

This, therefore, ſhows us what ſhould be the great Care of every Man in this Life, [viz] to attend to the Nature and Quality of our Actions, and to obſerve that Difference between them in our Actions now, which God, ſometimes very ſignally does even in this Life, but moſt aſſuredly will paſs upon them at the great and final Day of Diſtinction; in which we find an eternal Separation made between them, never more to be united. "Wo unto them that call Good, Evil; and Evil, Good; - that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter; - that put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs;" for this Confuſion will not avail in the great Day: The Tares, however they are here promiſcuouſly ſown, will hereafter be ſeparated from the Wheat, which will be gathered into the Barn, but the Chaff will be burnt up with unquenchable Fire. — Again,

We here alſo learn further, that the Reward of the next Life will bear a Proportion to the Degrees of Good and Evil which we have done here, in this World. — Then,

On the one Hand, here is Matter of exceeding great Comfort & Encouragement to us in the Ways of Holineſs and Virtue: - This is a mighty Argument to grow in Grace, & to improve in all Goodneſs, "ſhining, as the clear Light, more and more unto

unto perfect Day;" "well-knowing, that our Labour will not be in Vain in the Lord;" but that according to the Degree of our Service & Obedience, of our Virtue and Goodneſs, ſo will be the Degree of our Glory and Happineſs.

Let us not, then, content ourſelves with any low Degree of Goodneſs, but be continually aſpiring after the higheſt Perfection we are here, in this Life, capable of: — Since we have ſuch a Prize in our View, "let us run not only with all Patience, but with all our Might, the Race that is ſet before us." Let us preſs after the higheſt Degree of Virtue and Holineſs, & labour to be as good as we hope to be next hereafter; to be as good as we can be in this World, that in the next our Happineſs may be the greater; that when the great Day of Recompence ſhall come, we may receive an ample Reward. But,

This Conſideration, on the other Hand, is Matter of as great Terror to the Wicked and Ungodly.

For, As there are Degrees in Glory, ſo may we well ſuppoſe there are in Miſery alſo; and that Sinners, therefore, who are ſo extravagant to "ſin (as it were,) "with a Cart-Rope," "who let themſelves looſe to commit all Wickedneſs with "Greedineſs;" ſuch muſt expect the ſoreſt Judgment; for, as "Mercy will ſoon pardon the meaneſt, ſo migh-

ty Tranſgreſſors ſhall be mightily tormented."

Where ſhall we find Terms to deſcribe the Tumults and Terrors of thoſe whom this Day ſhall overtake unawares? Not unawares for Want of ſufficient Warning, much might then be alledged in their Excuſe; but, unawares for Want of neceſſary and due Preparation, and attending to that Warning, which leaves no Room for Apologies.

What Hills will the Wicked and Profane then call to fall on them! what Mountains to cover them, when He, whom in Words and Actions they have denied, or more impiouſly defied, "ſhall come in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on the ungodly, & on all them that know not God, and obey not the the Goſpel of his Son." — In a Word,

If God will be thus ſtrictly impartial, (as the Scriptures repreſent him to be,) and "every Diſobedience of Man" ſhall receive a rigorous Allotment of Puniſhment from the divine Juſtice, "what Manner of Men ought we to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs!" With what Fear and Trembling ſhould we apply ourſelves to work out our Salvation, and make our Calling & Election ſure!"

It may, perhaps, ſeem too rigorous to us, that our ſupreme Happineſs ſhould depend on ſo exact a Performance of our Duty: But, as Salvation is the

Gift

Gift of God, He therefore might beſtow it on what Conditions he pleaſed, & it is not for us to preſcribe the Terms: — And, we may be aſſured that He hath not raiſed the Price above the Value of it; neither are the Conditions ſo hard as our Supineneſs would repreſent them; but are proportioned to our Abilities, with ſo much Juſtice and Compaſſion, that it is our own Fault if we miſcarry.

"Conſider this all ye that forget God; conſider it, and be wiſe;" for otherwiſe be aſſured, that the Time is coming, when "He will no more keep Silence, but will pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you;" and will conſign you over to everlaſting Puniſhment; now no more to be deſcribed, than then patiently to be endured, "Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels." — But,

(And bleſſed be God for it,) As for the Righteous and Faithful it will not be ſo with them. — Words are as much too weak to declare the Overflowings of their Joy, as they are to deſcribe the Anguiſh & Amazement of the Wicked; for, "who can expreſs the Nobleneſs of their Reward, or who can ſhew-forth all its Greatneſs?" "Enter ye into the Joy of your Lord."

What remains, therefore, is, that from the Doc-

trine of a future Judgment, thus firmly eſtabliſhed, both by Reaſon and Revelation, in ſo various Particulars, we enforce the Apoſtle's Advice upon ourſelves, and take good Heed, that, "denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World, looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who will miniſter true Judgment unto the People, and give Crowns of Righteouſneſs to all thoſe who love his Appearing, and who manifeſt it by Works of Obedience, and a due Preparation for it."

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The End of the Fifth Volume.